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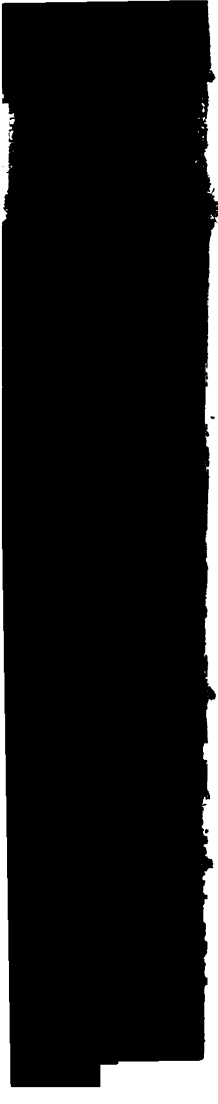

DOCTRINAL GU

A

DOCTRINAL GUIDE,

FOR

THE CONVERT

AND

THE ANXIOUS INQUIRER.

By a Clergyman.

Rooted and built up in him and stablished in the faith.—*Coloss.* 2. 7.

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PREFACE.

EVERY revival of religion confirms the truth that the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit. The awakened and the converted, whatever may have been their previous means of knowledge, need to be instructed in the essential doctrines of Christianity. In one important sense, the language descriptive of spiritual renovation is applicable to both classes: *old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.* In the vast and unexplored field which opens before them, they meet with many perplexities, and are subject to many doubts, and fears, and temptations, through the want of spiritual knowledge. It is obvious therefore, that while there are books for the young on every *practical* subject, it is vastly more important that they should be established in the doctrines which constitute the *foundation* of practical piety.

4-6-33 Sims

The press has indeed issued sermons, and tracts, and essays enough on *doctrinal subjects*, but it is believed that something is yet requisite, more specially adapted to the capacity of the convert, and the inquirer after the way of salvation. They have, in general, neither means to *purchase*, nor time to *read* a theological library. If they had—in their present state of ignorance, it might prove but a hidden treasure. They are anxious, the one class to know the evidence of "good hope through grace;" the other to ascertain immediately what they must "do to be saved," and therefore need to have the principal truths of the gospel exhibited in a small, and intelligible compass. It has appeared somewhat surprising, that, in this prolific age which has facilitated the progress of the learner in every branch of human science, there should not have been prepared some elementary book on Christian doctrines, for the many whom God is daily adding to the church.

The following manual has been undertaken at the request of friends whose judgment there is no reason to distrust, and from

the conviction, strengthened by much experience in revivals, that something of the kind is greatly needed, and if properly executed cannot fail to be extensively useful.

The author is fully aware that he has assumed a responsible task in this day of *biblical* and *doctrinal* investigation. But his principal object is not to settle controversies: it is to guide the anxious inquirer, and the young disciple by the plain dictates of that *Word*, which—understood and obeyed—will become a lamp to their feet and a light to their path, conducting them ultimately to perfection in knowledge and holiness.

Every important doctrine cannot be exhibited, consistently with the design of the work; but those doctrines will be considered which become the first subjects of practical inquiry, and which being admitted, will involve the admission of *all the truths necessary to be believed as a means of salvation.*

As it regards any original *development*, or *application* of truth, the writer may safely affirm that "he aspires to no loftier character than a guide through channels which, although intricate, are certainly not new."

NEW-YORK, May, 1832.

CONTENTS.

Introduction 7

CHAPTER I.
On Human Depravity 15

CHAPTER II.
On the Atonement 38

CHAPTER III.
On Repentance 67

CHAPTER IV.
On Faith 90

CHAPTER V.
On Regeneration 122

CHAPTER VI.
Directions to the Inquirer 141

CHAPTER VII.
On Assurance of Hope 154

CHAPTER VIII.
On Divine Sovereignty 170

CHAPTER IX.
On the Perseverance of Saints 190

CHAPTER X.
On the Nature of Inability 214

CHAPTER XI.
On Christian Perfection 231

CHAPTER XII.
On the Mode of Baptism 247

CHAPTER XIII.
On the Subjects of Baptism 268

CHAPTER XIV.
On the Worth of the Soul 288

INTRODUCTION.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINAL KNOWLEDGE.

It is a wise maxim in morals that "truth may glide easily into the mind through the channel of the affections, which were it to approach in the naked majesty of evidence, would meet with a certain repulse." This seems not to have been fully understood at one period in the history of the church, which may be called the *doctrinal era*. The essential principles of the gospel were exhibited so exclusively, and perpetually, that the system of Christianity resembled a tree divested of its foliage and fruit. The doctrines of grace, as they are termed, were too much blended with human philosophy—were represented in a formal, metaphysical, and repulsive manner—arrayed in technical and scholastic phraseology, and detached from their practical application. A *doctrine* became associated as a natural consequence with the idea of something *dry*, *unintelligible*, *unedifying*, and an unhappy prejudice was excited, and perpetuated against the most important truths of the gospel.

In the present age of practical instruction, and Christian enterprise, the danger lies in the oppo-

site extreme. There is a prevailing passion for light and desultory reading to the exclusion of works which require patient thought and closeness of application. Books on Christian morals even, are not acceptable with a numerous class of readers, unless they are composed in the style of the novelist. There is also an increasing demand for popular preaching, that is, in the general acceptation of the term, discourses on virtues and vices, in elegant and spirit-stirring language. This evinces full proof that we are treading on perilous ground. Should the demand for this kind of preaching and writing continue, there is reason to apprehend that the doctrines of salvation by grace will be neglected.

The carnal man may be *gratified*, but can never be *saved* by this deference to his feelings. If it be true that the most important doctrines may be stated with logical precision, and demonstrated with great force of argument without exciting any salutary influence, it is no less true that discourses on practical subjects can exert no salutary influence except as resulting from Christian doctrines. A doctrinal treatise disjoined from its practical application, and a practical subject separated from its doctrinal foundation, lead to a similar result. The frame of a building will shelter us neither from the sun, nor the rain, but a building constructed without a frame will be thrown

down by the wind, and endanger the life of the occupant. The *doctrines* of the gospel are the frame work of Christianity—*practical piety* is its covering. Both are necessary to the stability and beauty of the edifice.

The subject is partially illustrated by Bishop Horne, in another apposite comparison. "To preach practical sermons as they are called, that is, sermons upon virtues and vices, without inculcating those great scripture truths of redemption and grace which alone can incite and enable us to forsake sin, and follow after righteousness —what is it but to put together the wheels and set the hands of a watch, forgetting the spring which is to make them go." They who feel no interest in doctrinal subjects would do well to inquire how far the cause may be ascribed to the natural dislike of those abasing truths which Paul calls the offence of the cross. There must be something wrong on the part of the preacher, or the hearer, if the doctrines of the gospel are uninteresting. They furnish the sublimest themes for argument, and instruction, and imagination, and ought to be the most interesting of all possible subjects. Which things the angels desire to look into. (1 Pet. 1. 12.) The reader is therefore requested before he calls this a book of doctrines, and lays it aside as an unprofitable thing, to consider attentively the importance of doctrinal knowledge.

A DOCTRINE, in the general sense of the word, is something taught. It is used to denote the leading principles of any science or system of morals. In the Scriptures, doctrines are the prominent truths which God has revealed. It is easy, therefore, in reference to the present subject, to demonstrate the immeasurable importance of doctrinal knowledge. There is no possible way of obtaining salvation, except by purifying the soul in obeying the truth through the Spirit. (1 Pet. 1. 22.) This is evident from the Saviour's prayer (John 17. 17.)—the declaration of James (1. 18.)—and the gospel message. (Mark 16. 16.) Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth. He that believeth, (i. e. the truths which I commission you to preach, Mark 1. 15.) and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Now it is evident that no truth can be believed, or obeyed before it is known. There must be a perception of the thing proposed for belief, before the understanding can assent to it as true. He, therefore, who is ignorant of the principal doctrines of the gospel, can neither believe nor obey them, and consequently they cannot exert upon him any saving influence. It is no less evident that ignorance of these doctrines, must necessarily be accompanied by equal ignorance of the duties founded upon them. And hence

it follows that no man can perform the duties enjoined by the gospel, who is unacquainted with its doctrines, for the duties are the practical results of the doctrines.* The duty of repentance, for instance, has its foundation in the doctrine of human depravity. If the doctrine is false, the duty resulting from it ceases to exist. Plainly, then, since the duty is ascertained, and limited by the doctrine on which it is founded, we cannot understand the one without a knowledge of the other. It is evident also that the atonement of Christ is the sole ground of saving faith. If he has not redeemed us to God by his blood, it is perfectly visionary to believe in him as the Saviour of lost men. But how can we know that faith is a duty, if we do not understand the doctrine of atonement? The same connexion exists between other important scripture doctrines and duties.

The importance of our subject may be exhibited in another view. Doctrinal knowledge is necessary to qualify us for a defence of the faith once delivered to the saints. The enemies of the gospel make its doctrines the chief point of attack, well knowing that if the foundation be destroyed the whole building must fall. This one fact is proof enough of the value of Christian doc-

* See the excellent Tract on Doctrinal Knowledge, the foundation of true Religion.

trines. Evidently, then, they who say that the knowledge of these doctrines is unimportant, understand "neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." They either forget, or misapprehend the principal design of the Christian ministry.*

"Some good people have contracted a strange prejudice against the doctrines of the gospel, accounting them *dry* and *uninteresting* matters. They like *experimental* religion the best, they tell us. But I do not understand the distinction of religion into doctrinal and experimental after this sort. I would ask such a person what is experimental religion? Is it any other than *the influence of truth upon the mind*, by the agency of the Holy Spirit? You love to feel godly sorrow for sin; so do I: but what is godly sorrow for sin, but the influence of truth upon your heart? Is it not the consideration of *the great evil* of sin, its contrariety to what ought to be, its being committed against *light*, *love*, &c. that dissolves your heart in grief? Were you not to realize these *truths* it would be impossible for you to

*There is an order of men which Christ has appointed on purpose to be teachers in his church. But they teach in vain if no knowledge in these things is gained by their teaching. It is impossible that their teaching and preaching should be a means of grace, or of any good in the hearts of their hearers, any otherwise than by *knowledge* imparted to the *understanding*.

Pres. Edwards on the Importance of Christian Knowledge.

weep over your sin. But you love to feel joy and peace in believing; so do I: but must you not have an object to believe in? Take away the great doctrine of the atonement, and all your faith, joy, and peace are annihilated. Much the same might be said of other gospel doctrines; instead of being opposed to experimental religion, they are essential to its existence. That some doctrinal sermons have been *dry* and *uninteresting* is granted; but that must have been the fault of either the preacher, or the hearer. If scripture doctrines were delivered in their native simplicity, and heard with a heart suitable to their importance, they could not be *dry:* they must be like the doctrine of Moses, which *dropped as the rain upon the grass, and as the dew upon the tender herb.*

There is another prejudice against the doctrines of the gospel in the minds of many people. They imagine them to be unfriendly to practical religion. That practical religion may be neglected through an excessive attachment to favourite opinions is allowed: but if we imbibe and inculcate the truths of the gospel according to the lovely *proportion* in which they stand in the Bible and adhere to them, not because we have once imbibed them, but because God hath revealed them; such a reception of the truth, and adherence to it, instead of enervating practical godliness will be

found to be the life of it. Doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion, are all necessarily connected together: they can have no existence separate from each other. The influence of truth upon the mind is the source of all our spiritual feelings, and those feelings are the springs of every good word and action."*

* Fuller on spiritual declension and the means of revival. Vol. 8, p. 15.

CHAPTER I.

ON HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

THE natural character of man, in every age and under all circumstances, is essentially the same. It may exhibit various degrees and shades of depravity, but never presents any diversity in its substantial properties. The distinction of good and bad, therefore, which prevails among men, in reference to morals, is founded upon external appearances, and the unequal exercise of the natural affections. In the Scriptures no essential difference of moral character is allowed, except that which is created by "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." God declares that those only who have been born of the Spirit are righteous. All who remain in their natural state He has denominated the wicked.

The moral character of this latter class is now to be ascertained. It is admitted that they are depraved, but in what sense and degree? In order to the solution of this inquiry, it has generally been deemed necessary to consider three things: the *origin*, *nature*, and *extent* of depravity. The first of these topics is inseparably connected with the apostacy of our first parents, and has been the occasion of much unprofitable speculation. Nei-

ther the convert, nor the sinner inquiring what he must do to be saved, is in a state of mind to be benefitted by a prolonged discussion of this branch of our subject. And it is worthy of remark that the Scriptures, from the Pentateuch to the epistles of Paul, unless (Gen. 5. 3.) may be claimed as an exception, say nothing directly concerning the peculiar relation existing between the first sin of Adam, and the depravity of his posterity. We may safely conclude, therefore, that it is not of great practical importance for us to understand *how*, or *why*, by "one man's disobedience many were made (constituted) sinners," otherwise the inspired teachers would have been more explicit.* They direct our attention chiefly

* This subject in every age, and by common consent, has been acknowledged to be *mysterious*. The perplexity however which it occasions, arises not from the facts revealed, but from attempting to give a philosophical explanation of these facts. The various and discordant theories which have been framed, exhausting to little purpose the acutest minds, ought to convince us that the peculiar relation existing between the transgression of Adam and the depravity of his posterity, in its origin and bearings, is one of the secret things of God which we cannot comprehend. The *fact* that an important natural and moral relation did exist producing wonderful results, is obvious; but the solution of the mystery is beyond the reach of either metaphysical, or theological acumen.

The sum of our knowledge is this: It pleased God of his own wise, and unrevealed purpose, to ordain such a connexion between the first man and his descendants that they have inherited his depraved image, (Gen. 1. 21—24: 5. 3.) and become subject to the natural consequences of his transgression. In this general

to the *fact* of universal depravity; the remedy provided in the atonement of Christ; and the importance of availing ourselves of the great salvation freely bestowed upon the penitent and believing. I shall proceed, therefore, to consider the nature, and extent of human depravity.

I. *The nature of depravity.* Its essential properties are comprised in inordinate self-love, or selfishness. After the fall "man did immediately *set up* himself, and the objects of his private *affections*, and appetites, as supreme, and so they took the place of God."* "Indeed in a slavish subjection to these, and other limited affections, which had raised their objects to the place of God his whole depravity consisted."† This exclusive regard to private interest is discernible in every moral action. The natural man is influenced by the desire of his own good in all his plans and pursuits. A general admission of this truth is implied by the fact that in the ordinary transactions of life, men exact from each other verbal or written agreements as a safe-guard against the

way God has seen fit to express his displeasure against sin, involving man and the countless tribes of living things in the curse.

But it is worthy of notice that the final judgment which spreads out before the sinner the whole ground of his condemnation, calls him to account only for the *deeds done in the body*, (2 Cor. 5. 10: Rom. 2. 6.) and rewards every man only according to his *works*. (Rev. 20. 12.)

* Edward's Works, vol. 5, p. 258.

† Park St. Lect. 3d edit. p. 69.

predominance of the selfish principle. That this caution is necessary is sufficiently evident from the various ways in which self-interest operates. It leads to carelessness, indolence, dishonesty, falsehood, evasion of justice. In what else can depravity consist, if not in that absorbing love of self which disregards the glory of God, and the interests of others? It will be admitted that the natural appetites and affections—I mean the essential properties with which God has created us, are innocent in themselves, and become sinful only when gratified in some unlawful form, or indulged beyond the limits of temperance which God has prescribed. When the apostle, enumerating the works of the flesh, says to the Colossians, (3. 5.) mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, *inordinate* affection, *evil* concupiscence (desire,) and *covetousness* which is idolatry, I do not apprehend his meaning to be—divest yourselves of those desires which God for wise purposes has made a constituent part of human nature, but subdue and restrain them within lawful bounds, and employ them for his glory. "For which things' sake," he adds, viz. the gross indulgence of the sensual appetites and passions, "the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."

The wickedness of the heathen is represented as consisting in the worship and service of the creature more than the Creator. (Rom. 1. 25.)

Had they loved God more than the works of his hands, that is, supremely, they might have set their affections, in a subordinate degree, innocently on earthly things. But did not a wicked confidence in their own wisdom, and the dislike of "retaining God in their knowledge," lead them to "change the truth of God into a lie," and to idolize and worship material things? What is this but exalting *self* and its objects to the place of God?

If other evidence were necessary to establish the truth that depravity consists in selfishness, or inordinate self-love, the Scriptures are decisive, for they ascribe sin in almost every form to this source. A few passages will suffice. Men shall be lovers of *their own selves*, covetous, boasters, proud, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. (2 Tim. 3. 2—4.) The wicked, through the *pride of his countenance*, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. (Psa. 10. 4.) Who have said with our tongue, will we prevail; our lips are *our own:* who is lord over us? (Psa. 12. 4.) Which hath said, my river is *mine own*, and I have made it for *myself*. (Ezek. 29. 3.) How can ye believe which receive honour *one of another*, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? (John 5. 44.) All seek *their own*, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. Whose end is destruction, whose god is *their belly*, and whose glory is in their shame,

who mind earthly things. (Phil. 2. 21 : 3. 19.) From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence even of your *lusts* that war in your members? (James 4. 1.)—God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit *yourselves*, therefore, to God. (James 4. 6, 7.) Only by *pride* cometh contention. (Prov. 13. 10.) The *pride* of Israel doth testify to his face. (Hos. 5. 5.) Presumptuous are they, *self-willed*, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. (2 Pet. 2. 10.) Through *covetousness* shall they with feigned words make merchandize of you. (2 Pet. 2. 3.) Ye are they which justify *yourselves* before men; but God knoweth your hearts. (Luke 16. 15.)

These and a multitude of similar passages are conclusive that selfishness is the great source of sin. The inordinate love of our own selves is the basis of *pride*, *contention*, *envy*, *cruelty*, *covetousness*, *obstinacy*, *hatred of God*. The love of money, which is only another name for the love of self gratification, is called in the Scriptures the root of *all evil*. (1 Tim. 6. 10.) Certainly it has led to every species of crime. And it is obvious that *hatred of God*, comprising all that is awful in iniquity, must be ascribed also to predominant self-love. The desire of happiness, is a necessary incentive to moral action. And all the possible sources of happiness are comprehended in God and in the world. But these two sources of

enjoyment are so totally unlike, that whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. (James 4. 4.) No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Mat. 6. 24.) Negative goodness, therefore, in relation to morals and religion, is imaginary. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. (Mat. 12. 30.) If therefore we were guilty of no actual transgression, we should be justly punishable, if we had done no good. God requires us to employ our powers and faculties in his service, and the neglect of obedience is made the ground of final condemnation. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment. (Mat. 25. 45.) We must necessarily then make either the world or its Creator the object of our highest regard. But the natural man worships and serves the creature, created things, more than the Creator. His love of self-gratification, therefore, will excite enmity against God, because the character, and law, and gospel of God, are directly opposed to the riches, pleasures, and honours which constitute his chosen inheritance.

It would be easy to show that a criminal degree of self-love is the cause of all the religious duties performed by men in their natural character. The

object of this external obedience is, either to obtain the praise of men, like the Pharisees, or to substantiate a claim on the divine favour as an equivalent for the repulsive duties of repentance and faith.

There is one more argument in support of the doctrine that depravity consists in supreme self-love. The Scriptures describe holiness as the opposite of selfishness. Charity [holy love] suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not *her own;* is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. (1 Cor. 13. 4—7.) Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself.* (Mat. 22. 39: Ex. 20. 16, 17.) Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. (1 Cor. 10. 24: Phil. 2. 4.) Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Gal. 5. 26.) If any man will come after me, let him deny *himself,* and take up his cross, and follow me. (Mat. 16. 24.) He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (Mat. 10. 37: Luke 14. 26.) They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. (Gal. 5. 24.)

The Scriptures furnish abundant testimony to

the truth that holiness is the opposite of selfishness, and consequently depravity must be supreme self-love.*

*This subject has been misapprehended and it is important therefore to describe more particularly the nature of that benevolence in which holiness consists. The phrase "*disinterested benevolence*" is commonly used to denote the opposite of inordinate self-love, or holiness. If by this it be intended that we ought to divest ourselves of all regard to our own interest, I cannot subscribe to the doctrine. We are required to love our fellow men only *as* ourselves, (Mat. 19. 19.) and to do to men only all things whatsoever we would that they should do to us. (Mat. 7. 12.) And again: If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel. (1 Tim. 5. 8.) These passages justify a certain degree of self-love. And since it is impossible in the nature of things, that we should seek the glory of God and the happiness of men, without promoting at the same time our own happiness, why is it not lawful to make our own interest an object of pursuit so far as it necessarily results from doing good? I see not indeed how moral action can be excited unless it be from some feeling of self-interest. Neither can I perceive how in discharging our obligations to God, we can do more than to identify our concerns with his glory. Does he require more? Are not his promises and threatenings addressed to the feeling of self-love? Has he not declared that he will *reward* his servants openly? (Mat. 6. 4.)—that the righteous shall eat the fruit of their *doings*? (Isa. 3. 10.)—that the Son of Man shall reward every man according to his *works*? (Mat. 16. 27.) Certainly, then, it is right to act in view of these promises. When Moses was choosing between the treasures of Egypt and the service of God, he had "respect unto the recompense of the reward." (Heb. 11. 26.) Every Christian ought to have respect to the same recompense of reward—ought to strive with a holy ambition for "an *abundant* entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ," and a brighter crown than the scarcely saved will be able to wear. It is not reasonable to suppose that Paul will be no more

I shall now consider,

II. *The extent of depravity.* It is in two respects *universal*—all men are depraved, and every man, the righteous excepted, is wholly depraved. The word *total* is commonly used to describe the extent of individual depravity, and in the first place needs explanation.

It signifies an utter destitution of *holy desires* and *affections;* or that the *moral actions* of men in their natural character, are *entirely sinful.*

This does not imply that any are as *bad as they can be.* God has imposed various restraints upon the wicked, such as regard to reputation, the desire of esteem, respect for the feelings and interests of those with whom they are connected by a kindred, or conjugal alliance. By these and simi-

exalted in heaven than the sinner saved at the end of a long life of iniquity. One star will differ from another star in glory—there must be degrees of honour and blessedness, even where all are perfectly happy, if the righteous shall eat the fruit of their doings, and be rewarded according to their works. But it must be remembered that the reward is of grace. "God not only accepts of all who believe in his Son, for his sake, but their services also become acceptable and *rewardable* through the same medium." It would seem that the happiness which is a necessary result of obedience, ought to be excepted from the reward; but it is by grace that we obey the commands of God, and obtain the happiness inseparably connected with the performance of duty. Salvation therefore from first to last, is of grace. From this view of the subject, it is obvious that I mean by disinterested benevolence (another term is preferable) nothing more than supreme love to God, (Phil. 2. 5: 1 John 3. 16.) and the same regard for the interests of others that we feel for our own.

lar means; by afflictions and the strivings of his Spirit, he restrains the wrath of men. But these obstacles can be gradually overcome, and the sinner may become more and more corrupt. The unredeemed, and the ruined angels, will increase in wickedness forever and ever. There is no mystery in this as some imagine. A material substance may be entirely unsound, and yet continue to decay; and the mind may be perfectly unholy without ceasing to become more desperately wicked.

Total depravity does not imply that all men are *equally vile.* Some are really more wicked than others. The covetous whom the Lord abhorreth, (Psa. 10. 3.) and the implacable who shall find no favour, are more corrupt than the liberal and compassionate. The pirate, merciless and iron-hearted, differs widely from the young man who inquires what good thing he shall do to inherit eternal life, yet both are destitute of holiness.

It is not intended by total depravity, that men in their natural state are destitute of the common principles of *amiableness* and *humanity.* The natural affections are excellent in themselves, and their exercise is praiseworthy; but in their loveliest and sublimest exhibition, they do not partake of the nature of holiness. They exist in the heart which is a stranger to holy emotions. "Some of the highest actings of humanity I have seen in a sweet tempered infidel, who never be-

trayed any malice except against the gospel of Christ.—This decisive proof of unholiness lies against all these natural principles. You will find them all in violent opposers of God and the gospel. You might have found them all in the Jews, of whom our Saviour said that they had both seen and hated both him and his Father. These affections are all amiable and useful in their place, and when duly subordinated, materially aid the local operations of holy love. And being not destructible but by an uncommon domination of selfishness, their extinction becomes a mark of the last stages of degeneracy. (Rom. 1. 31: 2 Tim. 3. 3.) But their grand defect is that they are *limited in their very nature to a contracted circle.* They do not go up to God, and breathe through him good wishes to the whole intellectual system. They brood exclusively over a private interest, and unless bound by a better principle, are ready to fly in the face of the whole universe that comes to disturb that. In their greatest enlargement they still exclude the Creator. They stop at the threshold of being. They fix on a drop of the ocean."*

It is not necessary to total depravity, that the external actions should be *always wrong.* There is a *form,* as well as a *power* of godliness. Outward conformity to the law and the gospel is right, but this kind of obedience may be rendered

* Park St. Lect. p. 67, 69.

from a desire of the praise of men, or from self-interest, without the least reference to the glory of God. A wealthy man of fair outward character, a punctual attendant on religious worship, and who had contributed liberally to the promotion of religious objects, said when enlightened by the Holy Spirit, "I am ashamed of myself—my whole life has been nothing but *selfishness*." That the *form* of our actions may be right while the heart is destitute of holy love, Christ has shown in his condemnation of the Pharisees. Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. (Mat. 23. 23.) Ye are right in obeying the *letter* of the law: this ought ye to do, (Lev. 27. 30.) but ye are condemned for neglecting the weightier matters required by the *spirit* of the law. Ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. (ver. 25.)

It is not meant by total depravity that sinners are *irresistibly inclined to evil.* True it is, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." But this does not prove that the carnal man has no power to make him a new heart and a right spirit, otherwise it could not be required of him.

(Ezek. 18. 31.) Our own consciousness is the highest proof that we are voluntary in sin, and therefore, it is not of *necessity* that we transgress the law, and reject the gospel. God listens to no apology from this source: Behold ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house which is called by my name, and say we are *delivered* to do all these abominations? (Jer. 7. 8—10.)

It is evident, then, that we mean by total depravity simply that unregenerate men are destitute of holiness—that all their affections and actions, so far as they are moral, are entirely sinful. This is proved from the constitution inherited by descent from depraved parents—by facts in the history of the world, and the positive declarations of the Bible.

1. It is proved from *the constitution inherited by descent from depraved parents.* The nature of man is such that it tends only to evil. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh. I know that in me, (that is my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." The fact that all beome sinners without a solitary exception, is conclusive that the nature of man is predisposed to sin, and that his first moral actions will be unholy. There is no other way of accounting satisfactorily for the truth, that

"the whole world lieth in wickedness."* (1 John 5. 19.)

2. *Total depravity is proved from the history of the world.* It is a history of selfishness, oppression, cruelty, bloodshed, and every species of crime. The exhibition of the natural affections has given a few bright shades to the picture, but there is no tint of moral loveliness. Consider the representations which the Old Testament and the New give of human character. In the book of Job, in the Psalms, in Jeremiah, and in Ezekiel, there are descriptions of wickedness terrible enough to make the ears of him that heareth tingle.† But these descriptions, incredible as they may seem, are verified by facts in the ancient history of the world. A few generations after the fall, "the earth was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence." (Gen. 6. 11.) The flood sweeping away the whole race, excepting a solitary family miraculously preserved, could not restrain the new world from the same degeneracy. Noah became drunken from the wine of his vineyard, and cursed Canaan his

* I intend in these statements nothing inconsistent with the truth, that sin is voluntary. Neither would I intimate that we are less punishable on account of any constitutional properties derived from depraved parents. We never excuse an injury from our fellow men, on the ground of any thing inherited by birth—nor are we reconciled to the depredations of a ferocious animal, because its nature was derived from a noxious source.

† 21st Job: 10th, 50th, 73d Psa.: 6th and 7th Jer.: 17th Ezek.

grand-son. (Gen. 9. 20.) After the lapse of a few years, the tower of Babel was undertaken. (Ch. 11.) The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah became so putrid with sin, that they were consumed by fire from heaven. (Ch. 19.) Even the merciful deliverance of Lot and his two daughters, could not restrain them from committing gross wickedness with their father. (Ch. 19. ver. 31–35.)

Now if the experience of such distinguishing mercies, and the witnessing of such fearful judgments on the wicked, could not keep from sin righteous Lot and the remnant of his family, what must be the depravity of the unsanctified. Is it not evident that *they* have no fear of God before their eyes? As we trace the history of man, through the divine record down to the coming of Christ, we find increasing evidence that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." This is proved in the life of God's peculiar people. At the foot of Sinai, amid the fearful tokens of his presence, they made and worshipped the molten calf. Age after age they relapsed into the idolatry of the heathen, and its consequent wickedness, despite of the miracles, and revelations, and judgments, and mercies of the Lord. They killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto them, and at length filled up the measure of their iniquity in the crucifixion of the Son of God. Thus hath the Lord of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and

cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited: she is wholly oppression in the midst of her. As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil are heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited. (Jer. 6. 6, 7.)

The proneness of the regenerated heart to sin, is illustrated in the conduct of David, of Solomon, of Peter, of all the righteous. In this we see what the human character would become, if God should remove the restraints which he has imposed, and withhold his purifying influence, and leave it to its full development. Only in this way can we form a just estimate of depravity, and thus judging, no doubt would remain that the natural heart is desperately wicked. The Scriptures no less truly than significantly, call depravity the *plague* of every man's own heart. (1 Kings 8. 38.)

We have thus far considered only the representations of the natural character of man, given in the *Old* Testament. The *New* presents us with the same dark, desolate picture. In the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, the wickedness of the heathen—of those who had received and extinguished the light of revelation—is described with that accumulation of epithets, which shows

that the force of language could do no more. But in the third chapter, Paul applies the description to Jew and Gentile, without distinction. "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, (Psa. 14.) There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." The same apostle gives a general description of human character, when he speaks of the open wickedness which has its source in the natural heart. The works of the flesh are, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. (Gal. 5. 19—21.) The faithfulness of these general representations, is confirmed by facts in the history of the world, no less than the descriptions given in the Old Testament. The present state of the heathen is the same that it was when the epistle to the Romans was written. Consider also the crimes of every species, committed in those parts of the earth which are nominally Christian—committed even while the Spirit is remarkably fulfilling the predicted times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The efforts of infidelity too, ancient and modern, toiling in proportion to the brightness of its burning, to extinguish the lamp of revelation, must be

taken into the account; and cold-hearted morality gathering millions of worshippers, "denying the Lord that bought them." We must look back also to the relentless persecutions, which have driven to caves and mountains, to prison and to death, thousands of Christian disciples for their Master's sake. More lamentable proof still of deep depravity we find in the *church*, redeemed to God by his blood. It is under every obligation, to keep "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." But it has often exhibited to the world, envying and strife. It has been a contentious household, and the truth can never be forgotten, that by one great apostacy—the result of long corruption—the Christian world, excepting a remnant of the faithful, was divided between the false Prophet and the Man of Sin, each exalting themselves to the place of God. If more historic evidence is needed, it is furnished in the recent career of a nation, adorned with literature and science, and the splendour of conquest, setting her nest "among the stars," (Obad. 4.) and madly endeavouring to wash away in pollution and blood, the very name of religion and its Author.

But for the most decisive proof of total depravity we depend upon,

3. *The direct testimony of the Scriptures.* A few passages only will be necessary. I know

you, that ye have not the love of God in you. (John 5. 42.) God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. (Gen. 6. 5 : 8. 21.) The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live. (Eccles. 9. 3.) The fool (a name often given in the Scriptures to the wicked,) hath said in his heart, no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good.

There are numerous passages also, which *imply the doctrine under consideration.* They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (Rom. 8.) The *sacrifice* of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. The *way* of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord. The *thoughts* of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. The Lord is far from the wicked. (Prov. 15. 8, 9, 26, 29. See also, Luke 16. 15: Mat. 12. 35.) Passages of this kind, and they are numerous, establish the truth that

God is not pleased with the moral character of unregenerate men. And if he sees nothing pleasing in their moral character, they must be destitute of holiness. It *is* so, for God has declared that the best moral performances of the wicked, are not acceptable to him. (Isa. 1: Mat. 23. 25.)

The doctrine of entire depravity is further implied, by *the necessity of regeneration.* "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." If we naturally possessed any moral goodness, it might be cultivated, and regeneration would be unnecessary as a means of salvation. But in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature. (Gal. 6. 15.) The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. (1 Cor. 2. 14.)

Total depravity is yet further confirmed by the fact, that in regeneration we are *created unto good works.* Not of works lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephes. 2. 10.) Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. (2 Cor. 5. 17.) Now if we ever perform *good works*, that is, works of righteousness previous to the spiritual renovation, why are we *created* unto good works, and whence the necessity of this?

Finally. The testimony of the righteous concerning their *unregenerate state*, establishes the fact of entire depravity. And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. (Ephes. 2. 1—3. with Coloss. 1. 21.) *We ourselves* also were sometimes (formerly) foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice, and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that, the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, (not by works of righteousness which we have done, but) according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Tit. 3. 3—6.)

Such is the evidence by which the entire depravity of the natural heart is demonstrated—evidence derived from the nature of man—from the history of the world, sacred and profane—the positive and implied declaration of the Scriptures, and the experience of the righteous.

What conviction has been produced in the mind of the reader by this mass of testimony, drawn from so many sources, and concentrating its force upon a single point? If you have been illuminated and sanctified by the spirit of grace, you have already "received the testimony of God, and set

to your seal that He is true." (John 3. 33.) You can comprehend the meaning of the emphatic language uttered after his conversion by a young man of the loveliest natural disposition: "*Depravity total! it is more than total!*"

But the unspeakable privilege may not yet be yours, to bless God for deliverance from the burden of sin. Do you then doubt the truth of a doctrine demonstrated by every species of evidence, through unwillingness to admit the proof of your own condemnation and ruin? This is not the way to be saved. By denying the doctrine of entire depravity, you reject the chief corner-stone which supports the whole edifice of redemption. You declare the atonement of Christ to be unnecessary, and pronounce the Scriptures a fable. Relief from the burthen of guilt is not to be found by shutting the eyes against the truth, but by believing the testimony of God, and submitting to his righteous authority. This is the only ground of hope for the ruined: Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (Rom. 10. 4.) This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 Tim. 1. 15.) Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world! (John 1. 29.)

CHAPTER II.

ON THE ATONEMENT.

THIS word denotes expiation, satisfaction for a crime, recompense for an injury; also, agreement, reconciliation. In the Hebrew it signifies a *covering;* implying that sin is covered or pardoned, on account of some expiatory sacrifice. In the Greek it means a ransom, the price of redemption, and is derived from a verb signifying to release or discharge. Atonement, in relation to Christ, signifies the satisfying of divine justice, by his giving himself a ransom for us, and thereby releasing us if penitent and believing from the punishment due to our offences. In a general sense, the atonement of Christ includes all that he has done and suffered for the salvation of sinners. Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. (1 Pet. 3. 18.) For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin,* that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor. 5. 21.) The general design of Christ's death is manifest: He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us

* The same word in the Hebrew signifies sin and sin offering. The Greek, translated sin in this passage, means an offering for sin. See Isa. 53. 10.

from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Tit. 2. 14.) It is enough for practical purposes to know that "the children of God, and joint heirs with Christ," are pardoned, justified, sanctified, and finally saved, solely through the efficacy of his atoning blood. Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that according as it is written, he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord. (1 Cor. 1. 30, 31.) But since the atonement, in its comprehensive sense, is generally represented by divines as consisting of distinct parts, it may be important for the reader to understand the ground of this division. The sufferings and death of Christ, in the union of divine and human nature, are supposed to constitute the foundation of *pardon*. The perfect obedience which Christ has rendered to the law in behalf of the sinner, is the ground of *justification*. The operations of the Spirit, purifying the heart, and keeping the saints by his power, through faith unto the day of redemption, is *sanctification*. This is also the gift of God, bestowed on account of Christ's propitiatory and meritorious sacrifice. The Scriptures commonly speak of the sufferings and death of Christ, as including all of these distinctions. (Isa. 53: Acts 20. 28: Rom. 5. 9: 1 Pet. 2. 24: Rev. 5. 9.) Yet they sometimes intimate that there is a difference between the

avails of Christ's sufferings, and the avails of his obedience. He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. (Gal. 3. 13.) By the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous. (Rom. 5. 19.) There is, however, no apparent design on the part of the inspired writers with regard to the distinction which they may seem to make, in the *results* of Christ's mediation, for they generally speak of it as a whole. And it is evident that pardon, justification and sanctification are intimately connected; because God justifies those whom he pardons, and "all that are justified," says Dr. Owen, "are at the same instant made godly." I shall dismiss this topic, therefore, with a brief explanation of the terms corresponding with the divisions which have been noticed. *Pardon*, or the forgiveness of sins, is sufficiently understood. This is granted immediately on repentance. *Justification* is a term derived from human tribunals, and signifies the declaring or pronouncing any one righteous according to law; it is opposed to condemnation. An innocent man may be tried, but is acquitted on the ground of his own desert. A criminal also may be acquitted, but it must be by an act of mercy. In this last sense the sinner is justified. The righteousness of Christ is reckoned to his account, (Rom. 5. 19: 10. 4.) and received by grace through faith. (Rom. 3. 24: 5. 1.) As defined by the Westminster Assembly, "Justifi-

cation is an act of God s free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone." *Sanctification*, as already explained, is the purifying influence of the Spirit, and the gradual increase of holiness. These three great benefits, viz. pardon, justification, and sanctification, resulting from the atonement, may be familiarly illustrated by a comparison. When sentence of death, says Blackstone, (Com. B. iv. ch. 29.) is passed on a criminal by the common law of England, he is called *attaint*, stained or blackened. He becomes dead in law. The inseparable consequences of attainder, are forfeiture and corruption of blood. By forfeiture all his estates and titles to property, which he possessed at the time the crime was committed, or afterwards, go to the crown. By the corruption of his blood, the "attainted person can neither inherit lands or other hereditaments from his ancestors, nor retain those he is already in possession of, nor transmit them by descent to any heir."

The king may extend his mercy to such a criminal on what terms he pleases. He may spare his life without restoring his estate. Or he may, by the highest degree of pardon, "make the offender a new man; acquit him of all corporal penalties and forfeitures annexed to that offence for which he obtains pardon." In this sense the

criminal would be considered *legally* innocent, or be viewed so far as the law is concerned, as though he had not transgressed. This will give us some idea of the sinner's pardon and justification.

Suppose now that the criminal is so inclined to evil, and so exposed to temptations, that he will certainly transgress the law again, and forfeit all the benefits received, unless his depraved disposition is subdued, and he is brought under the influence of correct principles. If the king had power to dispose him to become a loyal subject, and to remain in the love of obedience, and would grant this last, greatest favour, he would complete his happiness by securing him in the enjoyment of all the blessings so graciously bestowed. This describes sanctification.

We pass now from this general illustration of the subject, to consider the *nature*, *necessity*, and *extent* of the atonement.

I. *Its nature.* It is admitted that Christ suffered, in some sense, for the salvation of sinners. The nature of his sufferings is the present object of inquiry. Did He endure the full penalty in kind and degree, which was due to the transgressor? This does not seem either possible or necessary. The curse denounced on the sinner is everlasting misery, including endless remorse. We cannot conceive that a being perfectly innocent, is capable of enduring such a penalty. It cannot be seriously maintained, that personal

guilt can be so transferred as to become the guilt of another; and besides, if Christ, on the supposition that such a thing is possible, had really assumed the character of the sinner, he would not have been qualified to make atonement. Such an high priest became us, or was necessary for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. (Heb. 7. 26.) This is inconsistent with the idea that our guilt either was, or could be transferred to Him "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." (1 Pet. 2. 22.) If it be claimed that the natural consequences of sin are distinct from the penalty of the law, and that Christ suffered only the latter, it must in this case be admitted, that he did not endure precisely what the sinner would have suffered, except for his mediation. But there is another difficulty in the way of a literal substitution. The sorrows of Christ were limited in duration. And it has never been made apparent that a limited term of suffering, however meritorious or intense, can equal the smallest degree of suffering continuing through eternity. If the character and dignity of Christ enhances the value of his expiation, and thus balances the infinite ill-desert of sin, it must be admitted, even on this ground, that he did not endure the exact penalty of the law. He satisfied its demands, and this is the general idea of atonement—something equivalent to the injury, not a literal transfer of

penalty and desert to another. We can perceive neither wisdom nor benevolence in such an expedient. When a slave is ransomed, the whole value of his freedom is not paid, but the smallest sum which suffices to procure his redemption. If it is a matter of divine revelation that Christ suffered the full penalty of the law in the sinner's stead, we will "neither gainsay nor resist" the truth. But we find no conclusive evidence that such a truth *is* revealed. The prophet Isaiah says of the Saviour, his soul was made an offering for sin. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. In this sense, "the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." Such is the concurrent testimony of the inspired witers. The passages which speak of Christ giving himself a ransom for all, (1 Tim. 6. 26.) redeeming us by his blood, (1 Pet. 1. 18.) and of our being bought with a price, (1 Cor. 6. 20.) do not determine the amount of the ransom or price paid for our deliverance. They only establish the truth, that enough was paid to procure our salvation. The word ransom was in common use with the Hebrews, and was far from being confined to its literal meaning. It signified almost any means of deliverance from evil. They shall give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord. (Ex. 30. 12.) This is

called the "atonement money." (ver. 16.) He shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him. (Ex. 21. 30.) The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous. (Prov. 21. 18.) The ransom of a man's life are his riches. (Prov. 13. 8.) I am the Lord thy God, the holy one of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Teba for thee.* (Isa. 43. 3.)

It remains to inquire, whether it was *necessary* for Christ to endure the full penalty of the law, for the redemption of the sinner. If he is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," and "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law;"† it is evident that the law only stood in the way of the sinner's pardon. It was necessary, therefore, that Christ should do and suffer in behalf of the transgressor only that which would preserve the authority of the law—exhibit God's hatred of sin—and enable him to be just, and the justifier of him that believeth. May not something, accomplishing all these pur-

* The word כֹּפֶר ransom, answering to λυτρον and αντιλυτρον, is used, says Taylor, 121 times with its conjugates, in relation to atonement. And "*atonement* is always in the Old Testament rendered from some tense or noun, derived from the root *kaphar*." With what latitude of signification this word is used, every one knows who is acquainted with the Hebrew language.

† This passage, (Gal. 3. 13.) compared with Deut. 21. 23. explains itself, and shows in what sense Christ became a curse for us.

poses, be substituted for the penalty of the law? And if so, can any thing further be necessary to prepare the way for the exercise of mercy? If the penalty annexed to every just law is designed to secure obedience, no harm can result from substituting in the place of the penalty, any thing which answers the same purpose. Now we have a right to suppose that Christ, possessing the attributes of God, "being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power;" (Heb. 1. 2.) delivered by the Father for our offences—assuming the "likeness of sinful flesh," making himself of no reputation—taking upon him the form a servant, and becoming obedient unto death; even the death of the cross, (Phil. 2. 7, 8.) might redeem the sinner from the sentence of the law, without enduring its full penalty. We are warranted in the belief, that the sorrows of Christ, although differing in kind and degree from the punishment deserved by the transgressor, have made a more effectual display of God's justice and hatred of sin, than could have been exhibited by destroying a world of sinners. When Zaleucus* extinguished one of

*A lawgiver of the Socrians in Italy, and one of the disciples of Pythagoras, 550 B. C. He was very humane, and at the same time very austere, and he attempted to enforce his laws more by inspiring shame than dread. He had wisely decreed that a person guilty of adultery, should lose both his eyes. His philosophy was called to a trial, when he was informed that his

his own eyes and one eye of his son, he manifested more fully his attachment to the law which he had enacted; his sense of its importance, and his determination to maintain its authority, than if he had subjected his son to the whole penalty. At the same time he exhibited the strength of parental tenderness: and the result was, that the crime was never committed again while he presided over the people. So God, in delivering up his well-beloved Son to become for our sake, "a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief," has evinced his love of justice, abhorrence of sin, the importance of his law, and his purpose to keep inviolate its sanctions, more impressively than if he had inflicted the just penalty on his rebellious children. The blind eye of Zaleucus became a stronger safeguard to his law, than the annexed penalty; and if we have any reflection, "the print of the nails," and the mark of the spear, exhibiting so fearfully the evil of sin and the sacredness of the divine law, will more restrain us from disobedience than the fear of wrath. We shall be more deeply affected by the mingled scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, than by the deluge or the sufferings of ruined angels.

son was an adulterer. He ordered the law to be executed; the people interfered, but Zaleucus resisted, and rather than violate his own institution, he commanded one of his own eyes, and one of those of his son to be put out. This made such an impression upon the people, that while Zaleucus presided over the Socrians, no person was again found guilty of adultery.—*Lemp. Class. Dic.*

Here the *whole* Deity is known,
Nor dares a creature guess;
Which of the glories brightest shone,
The *justice*, or the *grace*.

Such, then, is the nature of the atonement. It is the wise, mysterious, merciful expedient of God, whereby he releases the penitent sinner, not from the obligations, but from the condemnation of the law, by inflicting on his well-beloved Son, the sufferings necessary to preserve inviolate its sanctions, and render consistent the exhibition of mercy.

II. *The necessity of the atonement.* Consciousness of sin, is accompanied by the conviction that something is necessary as an expiation. The heathen in every age have offered various and horrid sacrifices, and subjected themselves to great self-denial and sufferings, as a means of appeasing the anger, and propitiating the favour of their gods. If they derived the idea of sacrifices originally from the divine institution, still the general observance of them after all knowledge of the true God is lost, proves the conviction to be natural, that sin cannot reasonably be pardoned without some kind of atonement. The inhabitants of countries nominally Christian, who do not admit the need of justification by Christ, are constrained to feel that something meritorious or expiatory on their part, is necessary to reconciliation with God. The ancient inquiry

shows that the guilty are conscious of the necessity of some sacrifice as a means of obtaining the divine favour: Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased (propitiated) with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (Mic. 6. 6, 7.)

This conviction, common to all men, that something is necessary to the remission of sins and peace with God, the Scriptures prove to be well grounded. The first intimations of grace to man after the fall, (Gen. 3. 15.) are generally supposed to imply the need of an expiation for sin, and to refer obscurely to the purposed atonement, to be made manifest in the fullness of time. The first sacrifice which the Scriptures have made a subject of record, (Gen. 4. 4.) the sacrifices offered by the patriarchs, and the rites and ceremonies instituted under the law, imply the need of expiation. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle shows that this train of ceremonies could not take away sin, but signified the necessity of some great atonement. Almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. But in those sacrifices, there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the

blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. (Heb. 9. 22: 10. 4.) The necessity of atonement is further implied in the birth and death of Christ. The miraculous creation of his human nature—his life of innocence and grief—the sorrows of Gethsemane, and the circumstances of his death, are conclusive that he appeared on the earth for some uncommon purpose. Was it merely to set us an example of fortitude and obedience, and to confirm by martyrdom the truth of his doctrines? God might have qualified a mere man for the accomplishment of these objects. But how can the intense agony of this holy sufferer in the garden and on the cross be explained, if he endured these sorrows on his own account? This mystery must remain for ever insolvable, unless we resort to the Scriptures for its interpretation: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquity; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." If it is a fact then, as I am now to prove, that an atonement has been made for our offences, this is full proof that it was necessary. We cannot deny it without impeaching the veracity, and calling in question the wisdom and the goodness of God.

The prophets speak of Christ in his office of Mediator and Redeemer: Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin—He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his

knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. (Isa. 53. 10, 11.) Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. After three-score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself. (Dan. 9. 24, 26.) But thou Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. (Micah 5. 2.) Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isa. 9. 6, 7.)

Christ himself declared explicitly that he came to lay down his life for the sins of men. Even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Mat. 20. 28.) The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (John 6. 51.) The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost. (Mat. 18. 11.) The institution of the Supper is a public and perpe-

tual memorial of the truth, that Christ was offered as a sacrifice for sin: This is my blood of the New Testament, (covenant) which is shed for many, for the remission of sins. (Mat. 26. 28.)

The apostles taught directly and continually the doctrine that Christ redeemed us to God by his blood. It was through the preaching of this truth, that the wonders of grace were exhibited on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2. 36—38.) This is the grand theme of the gospel. Neither by the blood of goats, and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. (Heb. 9. 12—14.) Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged (expiated) our sins sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Heb. 1. 3.) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. (Eph. 1. 7.) The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1. 7.) Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. (Rev. 5. 9.)

The necessity of atonement by Christ, may be further illustrated by a view of the divine law. "We should consider," says Dr. Watts,* "the following propositions. (1.) The great God having

* Sermons 34, 35, 36, 37.

made man, appointed to govern him, by a wise and righteous law, wherein glory and honour, life and immortality, are the designed rewards for perfect obedience; but tribulation and wrath, pain and death, are the appointed recompense to those who violate this law. (Gen. 2. 17: Rom. 2. 6—11.) (2.) All mankind have broken this law. (Rom. 3. 23: 5. 12.) (3.) God in his infinite wisdom did not think fit to pardon sinful man, without some compensation for his broken law: for, (1.) If the great Ruler of the world had pardoned the sins of men without any satisfaction, then his laws might seem not worth the vindicating. (2.) Men would have been tempted to persist in the rebellion, and to repeat their old offences. (3.) His forms of government among his creatures, might have appeared as a matter of small importance. (4.) God had a mind to make a very illustrious display both of his justice and of his grace among mankind: on these accounts he would not pardon sin without a satisfaction." The conclusiveness of this reasoning is apparent from the fact that sinful men cannot, either by obedience or suffering, merit deliverance from condemnation. If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (Gal. 2. 21.) By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. (Rom. 3. 20.) Be it known unto you therefore men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of

III. *The extent of the atonement.* A diversity of opinion on this subject, as well as upon the nature of the atonement, has been occasioned by the different senses in which the word is used. Some writers understand the phrases "bought with a price, redeemed, ransomed," in some degree literally, and consider the atonement as including reconciliation with God, and the consequent salvation. In this sense, all for whom the atonement was made will infallibly be saved, for the debt against them being cancelled, they must be released. They who thus define the word atonement, are obliged either to limit its extent, or admit the doctrine of universal salvation. Accordingly they maintain, as they ought with their view of the subject, that Christ died only for those whom God purposed to save—that he paid for none else the price of redemption.

Other writers make a distinction between the atonement, and the bestowment of its spiritual benefits. They consider the atonement itself as the ground of justification, but maintain that although it *enables*, it does not *oblige* God to

but one God. This is the sum of our knowledge concerning the "great mystery," and we shall perplex ourselves to no purpose, by prying into a subject which never may, perhaps never *can* be otherwise revealed than it is, even to the angels. Here faith must lean in silence on her beloved—and wonder—and adore!

Mat. 28. 19: 16. 27: John 5. 37: 1 John 5. 7: Rom. 15. 30: 2 Thess. 3. 5: 2 Cor. 13. 14: John 14. 16: Acts 5. 3, 4: 20. 28.

save sinners. They suppose the peculiarity of redemption to consist in the sovereignty of its application. The ground of distinction between the atonement as here defined, and the application of its merits, is supported by many passages of Scripture. It is evident that the death of Christ avails nothing to salvation, until its benefits are received by faith. This is illustrated in the instance of Paul. While "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," he was treading the broad way to perdition, as certainly as any of the Jews who rejected the promised Messiah, and perished in their sins. The Scriptures confirm this assertion. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1. 7.) There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom. 8. 1.) He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already. (John 3. 18.) He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God *abideth* on him. (John 3. 36.)

There is, then, a foundation for the distinction which has been noticed, and ground for the belief that the redemption by Christ is general in its nature, and limited only by the sovereign

pleasure of God in its saving application. There is, however, no very material difference in the two views which have been given. They who maintain that Christ died only for a part of mankind, admit that his sacrifice is sufficient for the salvation of all, and might be the ground of salvation for all, if God were disposed universally to apply its benefits. Calvin on Rom. 5. 18. says, that "*Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world, and is offered indiscriminately for all men, by the goodness of God.*"

The Synod of Dort, although they believed that "it was the will of God that Christ, by the blood of the cross should *efficaciously* redeem all those, and those only, who were from eternity elected to salvation and given to him by the Father," admit that "the death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin, of infinite value and price, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world." On this ground they maintain that the gospel, with its promises and commands, ought to be proclaimed to all nations and individuals, and add that if "many who are called by the gospel do not repent nor believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief, this proceeds not from any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross, but *from their own fault.*"*

The advocates of general redemption admit

* See also Witsius' Œconomy, Vol. I. chap. ix.

also, that none will be saved by the sacrifice of Christ, but those whom God has purposed to make partakers of its efficacy. These two views of the atonement, therefore, agree in the most important point, and tend essentially to the same practical results. The latter view, however, generally prevails, and deserves a more particular consideration.

The doctrine of universal atonement, or that Christ "gave himself a ransom for all," is consonant with reason and Scripture. If "by one man's disobedience all were constituted sinners," it is rational that the "free gift should come upon all"—be granted indiscriminately on the exercise of faith, "unto justification of life." God scatters his blessings with a liberal hand, untrammelled by pecuniary considerations, and leaves his creatures responsible for the use which they make of them. The rain which descends on the fruitful field, falls on briars and thorns, the desert, and the ocean.

But we abide by the testimony of the Scriptures. They speak of the atonement as general. A few passages only can be excepted, and these are reconcilable with the many passages of more comprehensive meaning. If Christ said, I lay down my life for the sheep, (John 10. 15.) and, I pray not for the world, (John 17. 9.) it does not follow that he did not lay down his life for all. He said to the afflicted Gentile mother, I am not

sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and yet he granted her request. (Mat. 15. 24.) But let us consider what elsewhere is said of the mission of Christ. God sent not his Son into the world to condem the world, but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3. 17.) And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2. 2.) That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (John 1. 9.) We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, (2 Cor. 5. 15.) That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. (Heb. 2. 9.) Who gave himself a ransom for all. (1 Tim. 2. 6.) The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (John 6. 51. See also Heb. 7. 25. and John 12. 47.)

The invitations and promises also of the gospel are made to all.* The Spirit and the bride

* "If the atonement of Christ were considered as the literal payment of a debt, if the measure of his sufferings were according to the number of those for whom he died, and to the degree of their guilt, in such a manner as that, if more had been saved, or if those who are saved had been more guilty, his sorrows must have been proportionally increased; it might, for aught I know, be inconsistent with indefinite invitations. But it would be equally inconsistent with the free *forgiveness* of sin, and with sinners being directed to apply for mercy as *supplicants*, rather than as claimants. I conclude, therefore, that an hypothesis, which in so many important points is manifestly inconsistent with the Scriptures, cannot be true.

On the other hand, if the atonement of Christ proceed not on

say come. And let him that heareth say come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely. (Rev. 22. 17: Isa. 55. 1–4: 45. 22.)

The command to repent and believe, is laid upon all. God—now commandeth all men every where to repent. Act. 17. 30.) He that believeth not is condemned already. (John 3. 18.) He that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark 16. 16.) If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins. (John 8. 24.) They that refuse to obey these commands, deny "the Lord that bought them," and bring on themselves swift destruction and a severer condemnation. (2 Pet. 2. 1: Heb. 10. 29.) I admit that the words *all* and *the world*, are frequently used in a limited sense. But it would seem that these various passages which strike the common reader as of general import, are sufficient to establish the truth, that nothing but repentance and faith are necessary to the salvation of any sinner; and that every man who hears the Gospel, is con-

the principle of commercial, but of moral justice, or justice as it relates to *crime*; if its grand object were to express the divine displeasure against sin, (Rom. 8. 3.) and so to render the exercise of mercy, in all the ways wherein sovereign wisdom should determine to apply it, consistent with righteousness: (Rom. 3. 25.) if it be in itself equal to the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to embrace it; and if the peculiarity which attends it, consists not in its insufficiency to save more than are saved, but in the sovereignty of its application, no such inconsistency can justly be ascribed to it." Fuller's Works, vol. 1. p. 89.

demned for not believing in Christ.* If so, it must be true that Christ has opened the door of mercy for all, and the vilest sinner need not fear lest the "fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitats of Jerusalem for sin, and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13. 1.) should be insufficient to wash away *his* guilt. "He that will know his own particular redemption before he will believe, begins at the wrong end of his work, and is very unlikely to come that way to the knowledge of it. Any man that owns himself a sinner, hath as fair a ground for his faith, as any one in the world that hath not yet believed; nor may any person on any account exclude himself from redemption, unless by his obstinate and resolved continuance in unbelief, he hath marked out himself."† The whole subject of the atonement, with the duty and privilege of every sinner to believe, may be familiarly illustrated by comparing John 3. 14, with Num. 21. 9, and following out the parallel.

And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted

* This subject is fully, and ably illustrated, in The Fair Balance, by Thomas Jones, London, 1824.

† Elisha Coles on God's Sovereignty.

up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

1. The serpents were sent among the Israelites as a punishment for their ingratitude and rebellion. It was an act of mercy therefore in God to provide the means of healing their wounds and sparing their lives. They might justly have been left to die.

So the giving up of his well-beloved Son to the death of the cross for guilty men, was an act of mercy. The whole world had sinned and come short of the glory of God, and if all had perished, his throne would have been for ever guiltless. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

> Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Love!
> The grand morality is love of Thee.

2. The brazen serpent was lifted up for all the wounded. Every one that was bitten might look and live. No distinction, as it regarded the offers of mercy, was made between the transgessors. The same means provided for healing the least offender was sufficient for the healing of the greatest.

The lifting up of Christ, also, was sufficient for the salvation of every sinner—the vilest, no less than the amiable and externally moral. This man because he continueth ever, hath an un-

changeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. (Heb. 7. 5.) Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. (Rev. 22. 17.) As Moses lifted up the brazen serpent for all the dying Isralites, *even so* was the Son of Man lifted up. But as the serpent of brass was only the means by which God saved the wounded from death; so the crucifixion of Christ was the means by which He saves the sinner from death. There was no necessary connexion between the lifting up of the serpent and the healing of the Jews—none were healed except they looked upon it—and there is no necessary connexion between the atonement of Christ and the salvation of sinners. He that believeth not shall be damned. As the wounded people therefore, without confession of sin, and penitence, and gratitude, and faith,* would have inevitably perished, although the means of deliverance was in their camp—so the sinner will perish, if he do not look to Jesus, and believe, and live. How shall he "escape if he neglect so great salvation?" He will perish, and this will be his condemna-

* The Jews did confess their sins, and beseech Moses to pray the Lord to take away the serpents from them. (ver. 7.) God must have required penitence, and thankfulness, and confidence in the means of healing, or he would have countenanced their rebellion, even while removing his judgments.

tion: He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he (Christ) was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace. (Heb. 10. 28–29.)

3. The wounded Israelites could not have healed themselves, or merited deliverance. They were suffering the just judgments of God. The sinner too is in a state of condemnation and ruin. He has nothing to say, why sentence of death should not be pronounced, and executed upon him. The wages of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 6. 26.) I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. (Rev. 5. 11–13.)

4. Had any of the dying Israelites refused to look upon the fiery serpent, they would have perished without excuse.

They could not have found just cause of complaint against the means provided for their restoration to health. They could not have claimed that it was unreasonable to look on the serpent, or to forsake their sins, and live a holy life, and bless God for his loving kindness. Had they rejected the means of deliverance, so mercifully provided, their folly and guilt would have been extreme, and they would justly have deserved the consequence.

So will the sinner be without excuse, if he refuse to look to the crucified Saviour and live. In the light of the last day, he will perceive that his madness in murmuring against the gospel—in rejecting Christ—in losing his own soul, when he might so easily have been saved, is incomprehensible. He will go away from the judgment-seat, dumb with amazement. Through eternity he will revolve the excruciating inquiry: "*How could I suffer the harvest to pass—the summer to end, and not be saved!*"

5. Had any of the Israelites been so unwise—if the strange supposition is possible—as to neglect looking on the serpent, what would have been the conduct of the healed toward them?

Parents, children, husbands, wives, friends, would not *they* in tears, and passionate earnest-

ness have expostulated with the obstinate dying, and besought their kindred to live? But if they would have done this, when natural life was at stake, how much more should they do the same, whose souls are saved? What is natural, compared with eternal life? This is the field for the exercise of Christian compassion—strong desires—ardent prayer—and the achievements of holy enterprise. Here must the dying sinner witness the earnestness, and faith of his pious friends, and their sense of eternal realities. And here must holy compassion—fervent expostulation—the tenderness of intreaty—and a burning zeal in the cause of Christ upbraid him for his folly, and alarm and persuade him to flee from the wrath to come. From lukewarmness he will infer that religion is an empty name—that sin is a trifle—heaven is of little value—and hell is little to be feared! Merciful Redeemer! keep the skirts of thy people's garments from being stained with the blood of souls!

CHAPTER III.

ON REPENTANCE.

THERE are in the Greek Testament two words which are translated repentance, but they have not precisely the same meaning. One expresses sorrow in a higher degree than the other, and of a different kind. The first of these words (μετάνοια)* derived from a word signifying *mind*, is generally used to denote that sorrow for sin which has the promise of salvation. The other (μεταμέλεια) signifies trouble or anxiety on account of something done. This word is used in the passage which records the self-destruction of Judas. (Mat. 27. 3.) He repented himself, as it is translated, that is, he deeply regretted having betrayed the innocent Saviour, and being greatly troubled on this account, hanged himself. So, also, in Rom. 11. 29. a word with a negative particle, derived from the same verb, is used. The gifts, and calling of God are (Ἀμεταμέλητα) without repentance, *i. e.* unrepented of. God is unchangeable in his purpose to make sinners the subjects of his grace. Having noticed this distinction between the two

* The original is given here, and occasionally in the following chapters, for the sake of those who understand the language. For the sake of those who do not, the Greek words are translated.

words translated repentance, I proceed to consider the meaning of the word commonly used to denote saving penitence. It signifiies literally to grow wise again, and expresses "an afterthought, on the soul recollecting its own actings; and that in such a manner as to produce sorrow in the review, and a desire of amendment." It is used, however, in various senses. Sometimes it means the exercise of contrition at any particular time, or for any particular sin, as in Acts 8. 22: and 3. 19. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. Repent ye therefore, and be converted,* to the blotting out of your sins, that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send his Son Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you. Repentance, also, sometimes denotes that holy amendment of the life, which results from godly sorrow: and frequently includes all that is necessary to salvation. (Luke 13. 3: 2 Pet. 3. 9.) In 2 Cor. 7. 10. repentance signifies reformation. Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of, regretted: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. This last mentioned sorrow, is called in systems of divinity, *legal* repentance—the tem-

* The translation of this passage, in the received version, does not exactly express the meaning of the original. I have given the literal sense.

porary fear and anxiety occasioned by the threatenings of the law. It is opposed to *evangelical* repentance, or that which the gospel requires as a means of salvation. It is important to notice, likewise, that God is frequently represented as repenting of what he had done, or regretting his own conduct. In view of the extreme wickedness of the world, it is written: It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at the heart. (Gen. 6. 6.) Again: It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king. (Num. 21. 11.) This is spoken after the manner of men, and must be so interpreted. The emphatic language describes the feeling of God toward sin. Sometimes, also, God changes his conduct toward the unfaithful, and treats them with severity, after treating them with kindness, as if he repented of having blessed them. He is said to repent, too, of the evil he had threatened, when he is moved by compassion toward the guilty, or entreated by their supplications, and does not execute his judgments. (Psa. 106. 45: Jer. 18. 8.) In no other sense can repentance be ascribed to God, for he is perfect, and unchangeable in all his attributes. (Num. 23. 19: James 1. 17.) I have noticed thus particularly the various senses in which the word under consideration is used, for the purpose of presenting distinctly the great object of practical inquiry: What is repentance unto salvation. The Scriptures call it a godly

sorrow, producing the fruits of righteousness—or that holy sorrow, exercised through the influence of the gracious Spirit, in view of sin as committed against God, and resulting in corresponding obedience. It is a change of mind, and includes regeneration, because it has the promise of everlasting life! An eminent writer with his usual comprehensive brevity says: "repentance is the relinquishment of any practice from the conviction that it is offensive to God." This, however, although it implies, does not include obedience to the divine precepts. The definition given by Locke, therefore, is preferable: "Repentance is a hearty sorrow for our past misdeeds, and a sincere resolution and endeavor to the utmost of our power, to conform all our actions to the law of God; so that repentance does not consist in one single act of sorrow, (though that being the first and leading act, gives denomination to the whole,) but in doing works meet for repentance in a sincere obedience to the law of Christ, the remainder of our lives."

I shall now consider the *evidence*, *necessity*, and *duty* of repentance.

I. *The* EVIDENCE *of repentance.* This is determined by its fruits. The apostle in addressing the Corinthian church, has described some of the results of godly sorrow. Behold this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort; what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what

clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge; in all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. (2 Cor. 7. 11.) In the 51st Psalm there is also a very plain illustration of the nature of genuine repentance. The same is exhibited in the conduct of Peter. After his great guilt in denying the Lord, when Jesus looked upon him in the judgment hall, he went out and wept bitterly. (Luke 22. 62.)

This repentance is exercised through the influence of grace, (Acts 5. 31: 2 Tim. 2. 25.) and is distinguished by the subsequent life. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. (Gal. 5. 22.) These graces are illustrated in the character of the contrite man, and a description of his character, therefore, will be the best means of exhibiting the evidence of saving repentance.

He has abasing views of the evil of sin, as committed against God. The long-suffering, forbearance, and goodness of his injured Benefactor, fill him with amazement, and his heart sinks under the burden of past ingratitude. His eyes run down with tears of ingenuous sorrow for the neglect of such loving kindness—the abuse of such tender mercies, and while he freely offers the sacrifice of "a broken and a contrite spirit," it almost exceeds his belief, that so great a sin-

ner may receive the pardon of his offences. He feels no disposition to justify himself for past neglect of duty, or to "cover his sins;" but publicly acknowledges them, so far as the gospel requires, and makes an unreserved confession to God. He laments not only his deeds of wickedness, but the depravity of his heart. He applies to himself, the words of holy men: Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (Job. 40. 4: 42. 5, 6.) I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men. (Job. 7. 20.) The penitent man evinces the sincerity of his repentance, likewise, in the amendment of his life. He forsakes sin and turns to God. This is not all. He is fully convinced now, that his former life, however externally moral it may have been, was ruinous to the souls of those over whom he exerted an influence; and he is deeply anxious to prevent, so far as lies in his power, the pernicious effects of his past example. If he has wronged any man, he will, if possible, make him restitution. This is illustrated in the case of Zaccheus, the converted publican: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold. (Luke 19. 8.)

There is another peculiar trait in the character of the penitent man. He is restrained from sin, not so much from the fear of punishment, as from love to God, and the hatred of iniquity. He consecrates himself a living sacrifice to his Lord and Redeemer; and his prayer—proved sincere by corresponding efforts—is: Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as in heaven.

By thus observing the fruits of repentance unto life, we shall be able to distinguish it from the sorrow of the world which worketh death. The one flows from love to God, and a deep sense of the ingratitude of sin, and the mercy of forgiveness. While it breaks the heart with holy grief, it brings the soul into union with Christ, and sheds abroad an indescribable peace. The other arises from the fear of punishment, or the loss of some temporal good, and wastes away the health in inconsolable mourning, or, as in the case of Judas, leads to self-destruction. If the blessings lost could be restored, or the fear of divine wrath were removed, the cause of sorrow would cease to exist. But it is not so with godly sorrow. Neither relief from fear, nor the bestowment of earthly good, would prevent its exercise. Hatred of sin abides, for it has been committed against a God of holiness and truth; and the riches of grace only can pardon it. This reflection will prevent from drying up the springs of holy sorrow.

Enough has been said to enable the inquirer to distinguish between true and false repentance; but a deceitful heart, blinding the understanding, may cause him to overlook the distinction. There is danger of mistaking conviction of sin, for the exercises of a contrite spirit. However they may resemble each other, they are essentially different. The Jews at the Pentecost, by the fervent application of divine truth, "were pricked in their heart"—language denoting extreme distress—but this was not repentance. When they said: Men, brethren, what shall we do? Peter replied: Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. (Acts 2. 38.) Their conviction of guilt, therefore, in rejecting and crucifying the Lord, and the anguish of spirit attending it, was not godly sorrow. Judas was horror-struck when he saw that he had betrayed into the hands of murderers the Holy One and the Just, but he manifested none of that repentance which saves from eternal death. Felix trembled, but did not embrace the truths of the gospel. And many within the compass of our own observation, appeared for a time truly penitent, but afterward their goodness vanished away like the morning cloud, and the early dew.

It is of vast importance to keep in view the essential difference between the two kinds of sorrow which have been described. Repentance

unto life is an abiding sorrow, because "there is none that doeth good and sinneth not." It reconciles us to God—makes us holy, and happy. It is "a sorrow sweeter than this world's joys," which leads us to forsake sin, not from slavish fear, but from the conviction that it is displeasing to God, and destructive of temporal, and eternal happiness.

II. *The* NECESSITY *of repentance.* Few entertain ideas of the society and employments of heaven so gross as not to admit that repentance is necessary for the greatest sinners. But to the eye of Omniscience, what is the difference between the openly wicked, and the merely moral? The divine law requires the obedience of the heart, as well as the outward form, and therefore a man may maintain a fair external character, and yet violate the precepts of the law as really as the most abandoned. The Pharisees, on the testimony of Christ, were without like whited (adorned) sepulchres, but within they were full of corruption. In the sight of God, every secret thought, and feeling is an outward action. With him nothing is *internal*, or concealed. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked, and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. (Heb. 4. 13.) Now if the commands of God are spiritual, they must be obeyed from the *heart*, or excepting the mere outward form, they cannot be

obeyed at all. Accordingly the gospel, especially the sermon on the mount, (Matt. 5.) declares the indulgence of evil desires, and unholy affections, to be the same—equally a violation of the command—as if these desires had been gratified. No difference is made by the Saviour between sin committed in the heart, and the same sin made visible in an outward form. The reason that these ungodly passions have not manifested themselves in open transgression, must be ascribed to the various restraints which God in his mercy has imposed upon men; not to any inherent goodness of the natural heart.

With this scriptural view of the law and the gospel, it is evident that "by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God." Not a man can be found, who has not repeatedly violated in his heart, every precept both of the law and the gospel. "What then, are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin."

Repentance then—not excepting a solitary individual—is necessary to salvation, unless we can be saved in our sins. But if this be true, Christ must either have died in vain, or what is infinitely worse, must have died, to purchase for us the pleasures of unrighteousness.

Consider for a moment each of these suppositions. First, *Has Christ died in vain?* Did he

become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, while sinners, without his mediation could just as well have entered heaven? Did the Son of God take upon him the form of a servant, and endure the contradiction of sinners, and the shame, and the buffeting, and the agony of Gethsemane, and the cross, for no purpose? Or was it to satisfy the demands of the violated law, and open a new and living way of access to the throne of grace? If the Scriptures have any meaning, they teach us explicitly that Christ laid down his life a ransom for many—that his soul was made an offering for sin. Now if the Son "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," (Rom. 4. 25.) that the Father might spare the guilty, how could He spare without a ransom, a rebel world—a small province in his universal empire? Let the sinner never dream of satisfying, by his own righteousness, justice, which at such expense has been already satisfied in his behalf. If God spared not his own Son, take heed lest he spare not *thee!*

But how shall we dispose of the remaining supposition that *Christ, by his sufferings on our account, has purchased for us the privilege, falsely so called, of living in sin.* It is too absurd to dwell upon. The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men,

teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Tit. 2. 11–14: 2 Cor. 5. 14–15.) Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid, exclaims Paul, and this it should seem, must be the instinctive language of every rational being, whether saint or sinner.

> The cross once seen, is death to every vice;
> Else He who hung there, suffered all his pain,
> Bled, groaned, and agonized, and died in vain.

But were it possible for God, through the efficacy of the atonement, to grant us the pleasures of sin, still we could never be *saved* without repentance. A polluted heart would be unspeakably wretched in heaven. The inhabitants of that blissful place are pure as Christ is pure—holy as God is holy. Their *hearts* no less than their *harps* are attuned to the high praises of God, and the Lamb. No discordant note jars in their everlasting anthems. How then, could the sinner, having no love on earth, for the word and worship of God, be happy in that society, where they rest not day and night, saying holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to

come. (Rev. 4. 8.) Had Saul while "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," been translated to heaven, would he have been prepared for fellowship with angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect? It is wholly visionary to think of enjoying happiness in the kingdom of God, with unholy hearts. The glories of his throne, compassed about with myriads of angels, would be as intolerable as the everlasting burnings. Deliverance from the mere *punishment* of sin can never save us. We must be redeemed from the *love*, and *pollution*, and *dominion* of sin. For this end was the Son of God revealed from heaven: Thou shalt call his name JESUS, said the angel, for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matt. 1. 21.) In this consists the loving kindness of our Redeemer. He releases his disciples from the degradation and misery inseparably connected with sin. He restores them ultimately to his own perfect image, and brings them to that everlasting inheritance of joy, which flows from sin forgiven and purity of heart.

Repentance, then, on every ground, is necessary to salvation. The ungodly man is willing to be saved *in* his sins, but thinks it hard that God should require him to forsake sin, as a means of salvation. He looks at the smoke of the torment ascending up for ever and ever, and murmurs that the iniquities of this short life should be visited

so dreadfully. He tries to disbelieve that this *is* a reality, and if compelled to believe it, rebels against the justice of the doom. Why, then, do you go to that place of torment? God has given his oath that he takes no pleasure in your death, but would rather that you should turn and live. (Ezek. 33. 11.) Do you not know that while you turn your back on the Saviour, and travel in the broad way, and quarrel with the justice of God at every step, you are saying at heart, 'I would that there were no hell, or that its fires were tolerable, that I might quietly live in sin?' What would you have God do? Can he require any thing less than repentance as a means of salvation? "There is no peace to the wicked." There *can* be none. It is not possible for God himself to make the wicked happy, except by making them holy. Do you call him, then, a hard master, because he entreats, and commands you to do that which is absolutely necessary to your eternal well-being? Do you complain because he does not quietly leave you under the everlasting bondage of iniquity, to dwell with fallen spirits, and the outcasts from this ruined world? You know not what you do, when you desire to be excused from confessing and forsaking sin. This will appear the more evident as we consider,

III. *The* DUTY *of repentance.* When one man injures another intentionally, and without just cause, common sense decides that he ought to

acknowledge his fault, and ask forgiveness, and avoid in future the like offence. It is no less evident that God is just in commanding all men to repent; and that they are under perfect obligations to obey the command. If he is holy, and good to all, and sin is inexcusable transgression, repentance is a duty too obvious, it might seem, to need illustration. But none of the divine requirements are so repulsive to the human heart as this; and after the power of argument is exhausted, many will deny the binding force of obligation, and die in their sins. This, however, is no good reason for neglecting to explain, and urge a compliance with the duties which the gospel enjoins. The words of the Lord must be declared, whether the rebellious will hear, or whether they will forbear. (Ezek. 2. 7.)

It will be admitted, then, that "we live, and move, and have our being" in God—that we are the subjects of his moral government, and accountable, at least to some extent, for our moral conduct. If it is also true that God is perfect, and the sinner is able to render the required obedience—a plain inference—it is proved that repentance, in the full and proper sense of the word, is a *duty*.

The divine perfections are first to be noticed. It is necessary to the present argument, that we consider only the goodness of God—his other attributes are more readily admitted. According

to the Scriptures, the perfect goodness of the Lord constitutes the ground of obligation to repentance, and presents the strongest motives to the performance of the duty. When Paul prays the Corinthians, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God, he adds: For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor. 5. 20.) When he expostulates with the blinded Jews, he says: Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (Rom. 2. 4.) The Scriptures generally represent the perfections of God, especially his great love in the gift of his Son, as the ground of our obligation to serve him with all the heart. It is evident that if God were not holy, just, and good, repentance could not be a duty. A corrupt king could not with much propriety require his subjects to be upright. If they should say: thou that commandest a man "not to steal, dost thou steal?" he would be perplexed to find an answer. If a lawgiver should trangress his own laws, with what face could he require others to obey them, and how could he inflict punishment for disobedience? So of the great moral Governor and Lawgiver. He can justly require of his subjects nothing more than conformity to his own character and example. This is all that he does require. As he which hath called you is

holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Pet. 1. 15: Deut. 11. 44.) I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.—Be ye therefore perfect, *even as* your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matt. 5. 44–48.) Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children: and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. (Ephes. 5. 1.)

If further proof were necessary that the goodness of God makes repentance a duty, we have his appeal to the conscience of his subjects, for the perfection of his character, and the rectitude of his administration: Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. (Ezek. 18. 29, 30.)

If we inquire, then, why repentance is a duty;

the answer is, because God is love, and sin is base ingratitude and causeless rebellion: They hated me without a cause. (John 15. 25.)

But the goodness of God should be considered more particularly, and set in contrast with the evil of sin. He sustains to his rebellious subjects the several relations of Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Redeemer. Every blessing which they enjoy, except existence, has been purchased for them by the sorrows of Christ. Look at the mercies of the Lord, bestowed in the various relations specified. Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare, and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. (Psa. 40. 5.) Consider especially the great love which contrived and executed the plan of redemption. If Christ tasted death for every man, every sinner may say, He was wounded for *my* transgressions, he was bruised for *my* iniquities. For *me* he endured the agony of Gethsemane—the death of the cross. For *me* he prayed with his expiring breath. Does not the goodness of God, then, lead thee to repentance? Is not this the foundation of the duty? And do you not find here the most subduing motives to obedience? If this does not melt the heart of stone, where shall it be softened? Tarry fast by the cross of Christ, and let his loving kindness pro-

duce the contrite spirit. I give you the advice of an eminent and most able divine. "The sinner should not dwell wholly on the dark side, lest he be wearied with excessive dread, and faint in his mind. Bernard gives a very useful admonition: Sorrow for sin is necessary if it be not perpetual. I advise you sometimes to quit the anxious and painful recollection of your own ways, and to arise to an agreeable and serene remembrance of the divine blessings. Let us mingle honey with wormwood, that its salutary bitterness may restore our health, when it shall be drunk tempered with a mixture of sweetness; and if you reflect on your own meanness, reflect also on the goodness of the Lord."*

Are you not prepared now to acknowledge that repentance is a duty resulting from the tender mercies of the Lord? If so, the same goodness can never release you from performing the duty, or withhold the penalty if you continue impenitent. God is compelled by his oath, and by love for his moral administration, to reward every man according to his works. He does not desire you to perish, but would that all should come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3. 9.) Why will you compel him to display in you the terrors of his justice? Have you ever seen a humane judge pronouncing sentence on the prisoner with a tremulous voice? Did you doubt that he would

* Calvin. Inst. vol. ii. b. 3. ch. 3.

have released the criminal, if justice had permitted? God will denounce sentence on you with a trembling heart, if you perish. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. (Hos. 11. 8.)

But you may resist all these arguments, and seek the common refuge in the plea of inability. It cannot be my duty to repent, because I am unable. Why then does God command you to repent, under penalty of his everlasting displeasure for disobedience? If he is perfect in all his ways, this command must be reasonable, and if reasonable you must have power to obey it. Do you say, then, that you *cannot* exercise godly sorrow for sin? This seems to be a modern plea for the neglect of duty. No objection of this kind, against the requirements of the gospel, is answered in the Scriptures. Had it been urged, some record of its existence might have been found, for almost every other objection is noticed which could be advanced by the unbelieving. But how shall I regard the plea of inability? Must I admit it to be valid? I dare not. It would subvert the whole foundation of the Scriptures. The promises, entreaties, threatenings, commands, penalties, stand or fall with this position, that man is *capable of doing his duty.* The Bible lays no

stepping stone to repentance; or faith; or obedience. It neither requires nor allows any thing but the knowledge of these duties preparatory to their performance. This knowledge obtained, the command is direct and immediate—Repent, believe. How then do you say, 'I cannot repent?' Why not? Suppose Joseph's brethren, who "hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him," had urged this as an excuse for neglecting brotherly kindness. How would *you* answer them? Could you tell them how to repent of their wickedness, and how to exercise brotherly love? Would you not say, The greater your hatred the greater your sin, and the more evident your duty? But this is your own case. The more you are at enmity with God, and consequently the more difficult it is to exchange that enmity for love, the greater is your guilt, and the more evident is the duty of repentance. A man addicted to intemperance finds it hard to reform, in proportion to the strength of the habit which he has contracted. And the farther he advances in this sinful course, multiplying obstacles in the way of his return to temperance, the deeper his guilt becomes, and the less excusable. If it be not so, the strength of obligation diminishes with the strength of sin, and duty is annihilated by a certain degree of iniquity. This serves to illustrate the condition of the sinner. He has loved sin and hardened his heart, till reconciliation with

his Maker requires the aid of divine grace. Christ is exalted at the right hand of the Father to give repentance—to bestow that gracious influence which enables the sinner to repent. (Acts 5. 31: 2 Tim. 2. 25.) But grace is not necessary to constitute the ground of obligation—is not necessary to free agency: But it *is* necessary to produce the contrite spirit, because the heart is so desperately wicked. I acknowledge, then, the sinner's dependence on the Holy Spirit, but not his plea for neglect of duty. He must admit his obligations to obey the command of God. There is no hope till he does. And when he realizes these obligations, he will feel that he has a "heart of stone," and submitting to Christ, will cast himself on the grace which bringeth salvation. We must therefore deprive the sinner of his false refuges, and urge and entreat him to forsake his evil way, and live. Repentance is as necessary to salvation as the atonement of Christ. The duty is as solemn as the consequences of sin; and the motives to the performance of this duty are as tender as the love of God.

Consider, before you dismiss the subject, that the interests of time and eternity are summed up in this one word, *repent*. It includes the whole duty, and the highest happiness of man. It is written upon every earthly object: these fleeting pleasures, as they elude your grasp, cry, Turn from us to God; we can never satisfy your im-

mortal desires. It is heard in the still small voice of conscience: Destroy not thyself. It is heard in the groans of Calvary. It issues in tones of horror from the world of wo: Come not to this place of torment. It is echoed from the songs of angels: There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

Here, then, impenitent man, are three worlds—heaven—earth—and hell, and your own conscience, entreating you to confess and forsake your sins. Will you obey, and live? Will you "cast away your transgressions, that so iniquity shall not be your ruin?" Remaining in a state of impenitence, you must perish without remedy. Omnipotence itself cannot save you. Sin and misery are connected by an inseparable bond. God cannot put them asunder. And his unchangeable oath has gone forth that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

If there is one truth which ought to impress the mind with the interest and solemnity of eternity, it is this: I must *repent*, or *perish*. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

CHAPTER IV.

ON FAITH.

When the doctrines of the gospel were first promulgated, I doubt not, they were easily comprehended. The Saviour and the inspired teachers, having little concern with speculative theology, exhibited the things of the Spirit in their practical bearing on the consciences and sympathies of men. The glory of God and the salvation of souls was the grand object of their preaching, and therefore they adapted their instructions to the capacity of the unlearned, presenting truth to the mind in a simple form, and illustrating it by similitudes drawn from the occupations of their hearers, and from sources with which they were familiar.

But the less wise successors of the Apostles, not contented with asserting and expounding the facts of revelation, wearied themselves with the philosophy of truth, and spiritualized and typified many parts of the Scriptures designed to be received in their literal meaning, and thus gave to the plain doctrines of the gospel a metaphysical and bewildered aspect.

Systematic theology, likewise, with its divisions and subdivisions of doctrines—its nice logi-

cal distinctions and technical terms, has obscured, in some degree, the sun-light of revelation. Whoever makes the experiment will find that he cannot rigidly adhere to any existing system of divinity, and give at the same time an unembarrassed exposition of the sacred volume. I would not discard creeds and systems. They are important, and apparently necessary—but they must be based on the Scriptures, and yield to the free scope of inspiration. The plan of redemption is a perfect system, but its several parts are thrown together with that wildness of symmetry which abounds in the natural creation.* The inditing Spirit, in the comprehensiveness of his vision and the grandeur of his march, tramples down any nice discriminations we may desire to make between the various doctrines which he inculcates. They anticipate and include each

* "The Scripture is no one summary of doctrines regularly digested, in which a man could not mistake his way; it is a most venerable, but most multifarious collection of the records of the divine economy—a collection of an infinite variety of cosmogony, theology, history, prophecy, psalmody, morality, apologue, allegory, legislation, ethics, carried through different books, by different authors, at different ages, for different ends and purposes. It is necessary to sort out what is intended for examples, what only as narrative; what is to be understood literally, what figuratively; where one precept is to be controlled and modified by another; what is used directly, and what only as an *argumentum ad hominem;* what is temporary, and what is of perpetual obligation; what is appropriated to one set or state of men, and what is the general duty of Christians."—*Burke.*

other, and, as a whole, present to the systematic observer that irregularity of outline which characterizes the material works of the same Author. The obedience of Christ to the law, for instance, has been made the ground of justification, and his endurance of its penalty the ground of pardon. But the Spirit saith—regardless of human wisdom—by his *knowledge* shall my righteous servant justify many (Isa. 53. 11.)—by the *obedience* of one shall many be made righteous, i, e. just (Rom. 5. 19.)—being now justified by his *blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through him (Rom. 5. 9.)—who was delivered for our offences, and was *raised again* for our justification. (Rom. 4. 25.) The distinction also which some make between atonement and redemption, defining the one salvation, and the other the ground of salvation, is equally at variance with the Scriptures. The Spirit saith: By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption (λύτρωσιν) for us. (Heb. 9. 12.) Christ hath redeemed (literally *bought* ἐξηγόρασεν) us from the curse of the law. (Gal. 3. 13.) Thou wast slain, and hast *bought* (ἠγόρασας) us to God by thy blood. (Rev. 5. 9.) Even denying the Lord that *bought* (ἀγοράσαντα) them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Pet. 2. 1.)

These preliminary remarks are applicable to the subject of the present chapter. Compara-

tively few seem to have a very distinct idea of Christian faith. We not unfrequently hear pious people say they have "faith to believe" that certain events are about to take place, and yet these events perhaps will never exist, except in their own imagination. There are many, also, who talk of the "faith of assurance," while they evidently do not understand the meaning of the language. It is common for those who are conscious that their faith is weak, to perplex themselves in the endeavour to ascertain whether it is of the right kind. Some rest contented with little more than an assent to the truth of the gospel history; and some, viewing faith apart from its inseparable results, speak of it as if it had no influence in forming the Christian character. Others consider belief to be confidence in our own good estate, and unbelief to be doubtfulness in regard to our own personal holiness. Many have a confused perception of the objects and influence of faith. So many different views of the same subject imply that it is partially enveloped in mystery. Such is the fact. The unlettered jailor, having his attention directed explicitly to the necessary qualifications for the kingdom of heaven, and receiving the word in its common acceptation, readily understood the meaning of faith, and immediately believed the gospel. But the apostolic answer is no longer intelligible to him who inquires what he must do

to be saved. If he is directed to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he will be at a loss to know which of the various sorts of belief has the promise of salvation. Theological writers have taught him that there are *seven* kinds of faith, viz. 1. *Divine faith*, which is founded on the authority of God, and is an assent to the things which he has revealed. 2. *Human faith*—the belief of things declared by men. 3. *Historical faith*—an assent to the truths of revelation as an infallible record. This is called also a dead faith, that is, unproductive of good works, and the faith of devils. (James 2. 17–19.) 4. *Faith of miracles*—the persuasion which one had that God would work a particular miracle by him, or upon him. (Mat. 17. 20: Acts 14. 9.) 5. *Temporary faith*—a partial and joyful reception of divine truth, the effects of which endure but for a short time. Such is the faith of those who are compared to the stony ground. (Mat. 13. 5, 20.) 6. *Faith with respect to futurity*—such a conviction of the reality and importance of a future state as is sufficient to control the conduct. 7. *Saving faith*—that full and confiding belief of the gospel which is exercised through the influence of the Spirit, and purifies the heart.

This division of faith into several kinds has undoubtedly served rather to obscure than illustrate the general subject. With an inventive imagination, the number might easily be increased, for

every thing which a man believes might be called a species of faith, and receive its name from the object or effects of belief. But I apprehend that the catalogue of *faiths* is already quite too large, and embraces distinctions rather imaginary than real.

> Faith was bewildered much by men who meant
> To make it clear; so simple in itself,
> A thought so rudimental and so plain,
> That none by comment could it plainer make.

As explained by the inspired teachers, faith undoubtedly was "a rudimental and plain thought." They call it *one faith*, and the *common faith*. (Eph. 4. 5: Tit. 1. 4.) It *is* strictly one, considered as the means of salvation; and I am confident that the various uses of the term, with few exceptions, may be substantially embraced in one simple definition. The original word, from which faith is derived, signifies literally *to persuade*. It means also to incite, instigate (Acts 14. 19.—to comfort, assure (1 John 3. 19.)—to strive to conciliate, seek the favour of (Gal. 1. 10.)—to commit; Jesus did not commit (ουκ επιστευεν) himself to them (John 2. 24.)—to believe, assent to, obey, confide in, trust, rely upon. Faith is used likewise for the veracity and faithfulness of God (Rom. 3. 3.) —and for the doctrines of the gospel, or the object of faith. (Acts 24. 24: Gal. 1. 23.) It means sometimes also fidelity in men (Deut. 32. 20.)— and frequently includes all that is necessary to

salvation; that is, faith and its fruits are described by the same word. (Acts 16. 31: John 3. 15, 16.)

It is evident, excepting a few instances in which faith is used in a metaphorical sense, that belief of the truth, or what is regarded as truth, lies at the foundation of all the different meanings attached to the word. By the influence of truth, or supposed truth, we are persuaded, instigated, assured, comforted, distressed, excited to seek the favour of God or of men, and to persuade others. It is natural, therefore, that faith should be designated by its fruits, and that the same name should be given to each. If, for instance, we say that we have no faith in such a man, it is only a summary way of declaring that we cannot trust him, because we do not believe in his ability or integrity. But although the same word, for the sake of brevity, is used to express things thus invariably connected, and which for practical purposes may be regarded as one, yet faith, that is, belief, differs from its results as cause from effect. The belief of the gospel is accompanied with anxiety, fear, repentance, or hope, joy, confidence, obedience, according to the state of the mind; yet these are not properly belief, but its consequences. And since true faith of every kind must be founded upon truth, regarding it apart from its fruits—as we must in order to a distinct view of the subject—faith is correctly defined

a belief of the truth. I do not mean that belief can exist, in relation to things which affect our interest, without exerting a corresponding moral influence. In a practical view, faith and its fruits must be regarded as inseparable. "It is an unhappy division," says a great writer,* "that has been made between faith and works. Though in my intellect I may divide them, just as in the candle I know there is both light and heat; but yet put out the candle and they are both gone; one remaining not without the other: so it is between faith and works. Nay, in a right conception faith is work. If I *believe* a thing because I am *commanded*, that is work." The Scriptures confirm this sentiment: What shall we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye *believe* on him whom he hath sent. (John 6. 29.) These things are premised, to place beyond a doubt the important fact that faith is not a mere unproductive assent of the understanding to truth. But there is, as has been demonstrated, a real distinction between belief and its effects, although one does not exist without the other. On the ground of this distinction, faith is properly called a belief of the truth. We are now to show that the different kinds of faith are embraced in this simple definition.

* John Selden.

It will be admitted that every species of faith must have an object, and that the object, whatever it be, if capable of producing any effect, must exert an influence corresponding with its nature. But the various *objects* of well-grounded faith are various *truths*. Every kind of true faith, therefore, agrees in this, that it is the belief of truth, although the influence of faith will of course vary, according to the nature of the objects believed, and the condition of the believer. It is obvious, then, that the division of faith into several kinds is founded upon the difference of the objects believed, and the diversified results of belief; not upon any essential distinction between the several sorts of faith. They are different in object, but not in kind. Let us bring to this test the seven kinds of faith which have been enumerated. Of these, divine faith, if it is a full belief of the truths that God has revealed, does not differ from saving faith. If it is not a real belief of revealed truth, it is either historical or temporary belief, and may therefore on either ground be erased from the catalogue. The same may be said of faith with respect to futurity. If it is that conviction of the reality and importance of a future state which controls the conduct according to the things believed, it is saving faith—if less than this, it is historical, or temporary, and therefore has no separate existence. The faith of miracles is, or rather was, the belief of some par-

ticular promise, i. e. truth of God, which he was pleased to connect with a miraculous event. The faith itself did not differ from other faith, although it was accompanied, through divine interposition, with uncommon results. But since this faith has ceased to exist, it does not require a special consideration. Human faith is also the belief of truth, differing from other kinds of faith only in its objects; but as it has no concern with the Scriptures, it does not properly belong to the present subject. There remain, then, but three kinds of faith, historical, temporary, and saving. I proceed to show that these are all correctly defined, a belief of the truth.

1. *Historical*, or, as it is frequently called, *speculative* faith. Many seem to consider this a sort of unreal belief, because it produces no fruits of righteousness. But it is, so far as it extends, really and truly a belief of the gospel. The speculative believer admits that the Scriptures are of divine origin. He believes that they contain, therefore, a true record of facts and a true system of doctrines. He believes many truths which God has revealed, but does not believe those truths which are adapted to make a salutary impression. Thou believest, says the apostle James, that there is one God; thou doest well. The devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man! that faith without works is dead? Belief in the existence of God can pro-

duce no practical effect, unless it is connected with the belief of other truths. The devils believe that there is one God, and tremble—not merely from the belief of this truth, but because they associate with it the conviction of their own guilty, hopeless condition, and the avenging justice of God. There is no truth which can afford them ground of consolation. Every object of belief excites terror. The sinner believes that there is one God, but this truth alone makes no impression. It cannot make him tremble, except as viewed in connexion with the denunciations of wrath against the wicked. He may believe other revealed truths, and continue disobedient, because the objects of his belief are not fitted to awaken him to a sense of duty and danger. His faith, therefore, may be called dead for two reasons—it produces no fruit, and the object of his belief is dead, that is, it is not capable of exerting any practical influence. This is probably what the apostle means when he says that faith without works is dead: he denies the existence of faith in such a case, except the belief of a few insulated, and therefore unimpressive truths. He cannot mean that the whole gospel is believed, and yet no works of righteousness are produced, for this is not true. The man of speculative faith, then, believes some parts of the Scriptures, but the reason that his faith exerts no purifying influence is, that the truths believed are not in

their nature capable of producing this effect. His belief does not embrace the essential truths which operate to the saving of the soul. No wonder, therefore, that the fruits of righteousness do not appear. How can they? The objects of historical faith have no more tendency to produce good works, than a dead tree to shoot forth living branches. Even when the historical believer advances a step further, and admits the truths which excite alarm, the effects of his faith are often neutralized by a mixture of error. Agrippa, according to Paul, believed the prophets, that is, was persuaded that they had spoken important and eternal realities. His belief almost persuaded him to be a Christian; but he shielded himself against further conviction of the truth by unbelief, and sin, and the erroneous things always suggested by a depraved heart. Felix trembled, when the same apostle reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; but he allayed his fears, and sent away Paul and the gospel to wait for a convenient season. So it is with many awakened sinners: they defer salvation to some uncertain future, and thus prevent the truths which they do believe from exerting their proper influence. Historical faith, therefore, is a belief of the truth, but not of the whole truth. He who has this faith, does not receive the Scriptures in their full and direct application to himself. He may believe that others are very

depraved and liable to perish, but he does not at all believe that he himself is desperately wicked—that the wrath of God abideth on him—that he is every moment in imminent danger of eternal perdition, till he makes Christ his refuge. These are the essential doctrines which produce conviction and lead to repentance; but in regard to them he is, in the literal sense of the word, an unbeliever. He is confident that he can be saved after a life of sin, or in some other way than the gospel reveals. Did he fully believe all that God has spoken, in its direct application to his own character and condition, the effects of his belief would be immediately visible. Is it possible for the sinner really to believe himself under the wrath of God, and in immediate danger of endless misery, and yet feel no anxiety, and make no efforts to escape, corresponding with the nature of his belief? It cannot be possible till the human mind is constitutionally changed. Absurd

To think that beings made with reason, formed
To calculate, compare, choose and reject;
By nature taught, and self, and every sense,
To choose the good and pass the evil by,
Could, with full credence of a time to come,
When all the wicked should be really damned,
And cast beyond the sphere of light and love,
Have persevered in sin! Too foolish this
For folly in its prime. Can aught, that thinks
And wills, choose certain evil, and reject
Good, in his heart believing he does so?
Can man choose pain instead of endless joy?

Mad supposition! though maintained by some
Of honest mind. Behold a man condemned—
Either he ne'er inquired, and therefore he
Could not believe; or else he carelessly
Inquired, and something other than the word
Of God received into his cheated faith:
And therefore he did not believe, but down
To hell descended, leaning on a lie.

We have also the testimony of Christ to the fact, that the sinner does not believe the essential truths of the gospel. The Jews professed to believe and venerate the writings of Moses. They did believe many things taught by him, and probably thought they believed the whole. But the Saviour said: Had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? (John 5. 46.) It is evident, therefore, that they believed their own interpretation of the language of Moses, but not its true meaning; consequently they did not believe, in any sense, the essential doctrines which he taught. So it is with every man of mere speculative faith.

It is further obvious that historical belief does not extend to the whole of the Scriptures, because no man can credit all the things which God has revealed, till he is renewed by the Holy Spirit. (John 1. 13.) We cannot believe that which we do not understand. And the exceeding sinfulness of sin—the mercy of its forgiveness—the

love of Christ—the peace of God shed abroad in the heart, and the joys of salvation, can be known only from experience. The essential truths of the gospel require a corresponding state of the heart, in order to a belief of their reality and importance. We must *taste*, as the Scriptures often express it, of these things, before we can make them objects of faith. Hence it is said that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2. 14.) The illuminating and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is necessary to bring us to the knowledge and belief of all truth. This is a point of such vital importance that I shall add the testimony of a late writer, surpassed by few in clearness of thought and force of argument: "All true faith must have TRUTH for its foundation. That faith to which the Scriptures promise salvation is founded upon evidence; and that evidence is the TESTIMONY of God. Hence it is with great propriety by the apostle defined *the belief of the truth.* (2 Thess. 2. 13.) This definition includes more than many seem to apprehend. To believe the truth in reality is cordially to credit the account which God has given of himself, of us, of sin, of Christ, of earth, of heaven. Whoever thus realizes divine truth must of necessity feel its influence. The same apostle

tells us that those who receive the word *as it is*, find it *effectually* to work in them. (1 Thess. 2. 13.) Hence we are said to be sanctified through the truth, to know the truth, and to be made free by it. (John 17. 17: 8. 32.) I cannot believe God to be that amiable and gracious being which his word represents him to be, without loving him. I cannot believe myself to be that vile and worthless being that God represents me to be, without abhorring myself in dust and ashes. If I really credit what God hath said of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it is impossible but that I should hate it, and perceive its dreadful demerit, and plainly see myself righteously condemned for being a subject of it. If I really believe the record that God has given of his Son, that is the same thing as to think of his excellencies, in measure, as God thinks of them; and in that case I cannot but embrace him with all my heart, and venture my everlasting all upon his atonement. If from my heart I believe what God hath said of the vanity of this world and the substantial bliss of that to come; if I realize the emptiness of all the enjoyments of the former, and the eternal weight of glory pertaining to the latter, I shall necessarily labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.

"If this be a just notion of faith, then it will follow, *that all unconverted men are truly, and*

in the most literal and proper sense of the word, UNBELIEVERS. Whatever they may pretend, they do not realize what God has revealed of his character or their own, of the nature of sin and its dreadful demerit, of the excellence of Christ, of the vanity of this world, and the solid bliss of the next. Nor can this their unbelief be removed, but by their becoming entirely new creatures, by a work of the Almighty Spirit of God. We are under a necessity, therefore, of concluding, that where these effects of believing are not produced, the faith of such persons is, in a great degree, *pretended*, and not real: and in that degree in which it is real, it is very *superficial*; it reaches only to the shell of truth at farthest. The essence and glory of the gospel is by them, neither discerned nor believed."* We are now to examine,

2. *Temporary* faith. This is more than historical belief, but, although founded in part upon truth, it does not embrace the essential doctrines of the gospel. The heart of the temporary believer is compared to the stony ground. He hath not root in himself, but dureth for a while, (Mat. 13. 21.) that is, he receives partially the good seed: but he does not receive the whole word which is effectual to salvation. He is confident that he has repented unto life, and been born of the Spirit. He indulges the hope of being saved,

* Fuller's Works, vol. vii. p. 5.

and this very naturally causes him to hear, for a time, the word joyfully, and to be zealous in the outward form of religious duties, and to be happy in view of what he considers his present condition and future prospects. But the delusion soon appears in his turning to the old course of iniquity. It is plain, therefore, that he believed some parts of the gospel, but had no perception, or belief of its essential truths. There remains to be considered,

3. *Saving* faith. In the literal and proper sense of the word, this is a belief of the truth. It is called, by the apostle, believing with the heart unto righteousness, that is, a cordial, hearty, or real and persuasive belief of the whole word of God, resulting in holy obedience. President Edwards says, as the conclusion of his inquiries: "Upon the whole, the best and clearest, and most perfect definition of justifying faith, and most according to the Scripture, that I can think of, is this: faith is the soul's entirely embracing the revelation of Jesus Christ as our Saviour."* Entirely embracing the revelation of Christ, is rather the effect of faith; but receiving him, and believing on his name, are in the Scriptures used as synonymous terms, because one cannot exist without the other. (John 1. 12.) If saving faith, then, is properly defined a belief of the truth, wherein does it differ from the other kinds of

* Observations concerning Faith, vol. iv.

faith which have been specified? Not in its nature, but in its objects, and of course in its results. Historical, temporary, miraculous, and every other faith, is the belief of things essentially different from the objects of saving faith; and this accounts for the diversity in their effects. He who believes to the saving of the soul, and he whose faith exerts no transforming influence, believe different things. The one fixes his faith upon those objects which tend directly to purify the heart. The other believes a few truths, which, detached from their connexion with other and more essential parts of revelation, have no such tendency. The fact, that they do not believe the same things, has been illustrated by a familiar example. "Several merchants receive from their correspondent at a distance, letters recommending them to follow a particular course in their trade, in order to escape a threatened loss, and to ensure a considerable profit. One of the merchants, on reading his letter, cannot believe that he is in any such danger as is represented to him—he declares the letter a forgery, and throws it into the fire. Another knows the hand-writing too well, to doubt of its really coming from the person whose name it bears; but he does not believe its contents, and therefore does not act according to its instructions. A third reads his letter as an essay on mercantile affairs in general, without observing the application of it to his own

immediate circumstances, or the call that it makes on him for instantaneous action; and therefore he also is unmoved by it. A fourth acknowledges the signature and the authority of the information, but reads the letter carelessly, and takes up a wrong idea of the course recommended, and sets about a speculation, before he has made himself acquainted with his correspondent's plan; and consequently receives as little benefit from the communication as any of the former. Now it is quite clear, that not one of the four believed the information of their correspondent. A letter is merely the vehicle of a meaning, and if that meaning is not believed, the letter itself is not believed. There is a fifth who reads, acknowledges the signature, understands the contents, believes them, and acts accordingly. This man believes the meaning of his correspondent, and if the information was good, he reaps the full advantage of it."* Of those who read the Scriptures, some pronounce them a forgery; some profess to admit their divine authority, but do not believe the most essential part of their contents; others consider them as a book of general instruction, without noticing their direct application to their own condition, and the immediate call on them to repentance; others read carelessly, and misunderstand the true meaning. The man last described alone understands and believes

* Erskine's Essay on Faith, p. 27.

the true and whole meaning of revelation, and reaps the unspeakable benefit. Faith, therefore, in general is one; the belief of truth; but the objects and consequent results of faith must be various. This explicit view of the subject appears to correspond substantially with the Scriptures, for although they frequently describe faith and its inseparable fruits by the same word, and use this word in different senses, yet they call the righteous believers, and the wicked unbelievers. What is the ground of this division, except the fact which has been demonstrated, that the unconverted believe only a part of the gospel, and the saints believe the whole?

All faith is one. In object, not in kind,
The difference lies. The faith that saves a soul,
And that which in the common truth believes,
In essence are the same. Hear, then, what faith,
True Christian faith that brings salvation, is;
Belief in all that God reveals to men.
Observe, in all that God reveals to men;
In all he promises, threatens, commands, and says,
Without exception, and without a doubt.
Who thus believes, being by the Spirit touched,
As naturally the fruits of faith brings forth,
Truth, temperance, meekness, holiness, and love,
As human eye from darkness seeks the light.
How can he else? If he who has firm faith
The morrow's sun shall rise, orders affairs
Accordingly; if he who has firm faith
That spring, and summer, and autumnal days
Shall pass away, and winter really come,
Prepares accordingly; if he who sees
A bolt of death approaching, turns aside

And lets it pass;—as surely does the man
Who verily believes the word of God,
Though erring whiles, its general laws obey,
Turn back from hell, and take the way to heaven.

We are now to consider the *fruits of faith.*

It has been already shown that there is a necessary connexion between belief and its effects. The influence of faith therefore will correspond with the nature of the truths believed. The conviction of the sinner, so far as it extends, is produced by belief of the truth, and this belief excites him to make the anxious inquiry what he must do to be saved. The faith of the Christian produces sorrow for sin; love to God; implicit confidence in Christ; the surrender of the soul to his guardianship, and obedience of the gospel. Faith works by love, purifies the heart, overcometh the world. The eleventh chapter to the Hebrews describes particularly its sublime, purifying, holy influence. The conduct of Abraham especially, laying, at the mysterious command of God, the child of promise on the altar—the decision of Moses, preferring the reproach of Christ to the treasures of Egypt, having respect to the recompense of reward—the unshaken confidence of Elijah, drinking at the brook and fed by ravens; departing when the brook failed, to be sustained by a famishing widow, and trusting in the Lord still, though he met her gathering a handful of sticks, preparing to dress the last

scanty pittance of food, that she and her son might eat it and die—these are illustrious exhibitions of Christian faith; instances of moral grandeur which cast into the shade the most renowned exploits of the children of this world. The influence of faith is clearly exhibited also in the history of apostles, and martyrs, and missionaries of the cross, taking their lives in their hands to teach pagan nations the name of Christ, and to find an early grave amidst the habitations of darkness and cruelty. But the fruits of faith have been already described while considering its nature. They are longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, holiness, unshaken confidence. The fruits of faith may be known by their being the fruits of the Spirit.

By faith also we are justified. Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. (Acts 13. 38.) We are said also to be justified by the blood or atonement of Christ, and "freely by his grace." And again, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God." The meaning of these several passages is that we are justified by grace, through faith as a means—a necessary means; because he that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him.

It is important, also, to reconcile here an apparent contradiction between the apostles James and Paul. The one says that we are, and the other that we are not, justified by works. They are however treating of two different subjects. Paul is establishing the truth that we are not justified by the works of the law, that is, are not accepted of God on the ground of our own obedience, but for Christ's sake, through faith in his name. It is not of debt, desert on our part, but of grace, that we are saved. James is describing the nature of Christian faith, and says we are not justified by the faith that produces no works, but by a living, operative faith. The works of which he speaks are evidently the works of faith, for he says, with Paul, that Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. It amounts to the same thing, therefore, whether we are justified by faith, or the works of faith, for they are inseparably connected, and in either case it is of grace.

Next in order is *the duty of faith.* If we regard belief as the mere assent of the understanding to truth, the evidence of which it is impossible to reject; and unbelief merely as the rejection of evidence which it is impossible to admit, we shall perceive nothing virtuous in the one, or criminal in the other. But the belief of things which deeply affect our interest requires the exercise of the moral feelings. The heart, in this

case, blinds the understanding, and perverts its judgment, and, therefore, must be subjected to the demands of truth. Was it not virtuous in Abraham to believe the command of God in respect to the sacrifice of his own son, by his own hands? Did it not require the severest struggles to sever the bonds of parental fondness? Did not the prophet exhibit the strongest confidence, when he dwelt at the brook, and at Zarephath? (1 Kings 17. 6—14.) Was not the same true of Moses, when he made his choice between the afflictions of his enslaved countrymen, and the honour of being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter? Must not the same be said of Habakkuk? (3. 19.) Does it not necessarily require the exercise of the holy affections to believe the gospel, since it commands us to reject the vanities of the world, and to receive things utterly repulsive to the feelings of the carnal mind? If the gospel cannot be really and truly believed, without the possession and exercise of corresponding moral affections, the duty of faith is as obvious as that of repentance or obedience, for it necessarily includes both. On this ground, the Scriptures limit the promise of salvation to the believing, and pronounce unbelief to be the greatest sin.

But it is objected, that if saving faith implies spiritual renovation, it cannot be a duty, because the sinner has not the ability so to believe. Why then does God require all men to believe, and

doom them to everlasting punishment for unbelief? Would he do this if faith were not a duty? He imputes unbelief to voluntary blindness and wickedness. This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men *loved* darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (John 3. 19.) No excuse, therefore, can be given for unbelief, but the love of sin, and the greater the dependence on grace for the performance of duty, the greater guilt. "The bare and outward declaration of the word of God," says Calvin, "ought to have largely sufficed to make it to be believed, if our own blindness and stubbornness did not withstand it. But our mind hath such an inclination to vanity, that it can never cleave fast to the truth of God; and such a dulness, that it is always blind, and cannot see the light thereof. Therefore, there is nothing available done by the word, without the enlightening of the Holy Spirit."* To the same point is the testimony of Dr. Owen: "It is indwelling sin that both disenableth men unto, and hinders them from, believing, *and that alone*. Blindness of the mind, stubbornness of the will, sensuality of the affections, all concur to keep poor perishing souls at a distance from Christ. Men are made blind by sin, and cannot see his excellency; obstinate, and will not lay hold of his righteous-

* Institutes, book iii. chap. ii.

ness; senseless, and take no notice of their eternal concernments."*

The *propriety* of making faith a necessary means of salvation, is as obvious as the *duty* of believing. If a friend were pursuing a ruinous course, and you were anxious to reclaim him, how would you undertake to accomplish this benevolent purpose? Would you not present truth to his mind, in regard to his case, and entreat him to believe and obey it? God employs the same means to turn the sinner from the error of his way to the wisdom of the just. He makes him free, sanctifies, saves him through the truth. In what other way except by the truth, rendered efficacious through the influence of the Spirit, can God convert sinners, and fit them for heaven consistently with their intelligent and moral nature? In no other conceivable way. He has given his Son for their redemption, and now requires them to believe and obey the precious truths which will conduct them from the broad way of death into the narrow way of life. From the nature of the human mind, rather than from any arbitrary command of God, faith is necessary to salvation. Does it not possess the only key by which the gate of the holy city *can* be opened for the admission of sinners? Why then should not salvation be suspended on the condition of

* On Indwelling Sin, chap. xvi.

performing this duty? But the unspeakable benefits of faith should be taken also into view. It has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Consider the blessedness of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God—the blessedness of Moses, singing with the heavenly hosts the "song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb"—the blessedness of Elias, caught up to heaven in the chariot of fire, and honoured as one of the two celestial visitants who communed with the Son of God on the holy mount.

The view we have taken of the subject explains what is called *weak* faith. Christians often complain that they have not a realizing sense of heavenly things. Not suspecting that unbelief is the sole cause, they wonder how there can be such a contradiction between their faith and practice; for they think that they really believe the gospel, but do not feel its power. This is a serious error. He that feels little of the power of the gospel believes but little, for the fruits correspond with the measure of faith. He who fully believes himself to be the lukewarm disciple, and as loathsome to Christ as he represents him to be, (Rev. 2. 16.) cannot remain in that state. It is impossible, as we have shown, really and truly to believe the record which God hath given of his Son, without feeling the power of godliness. The holy and heavenly minded Archbishop Leighton

says, quoting from some author: "If you would have much faith, love much; and if you would have much love, believe much." This is valuable admonition. Faith and love invariably flourish and languish together. The lukewarm Christian, therefore, must believe, and awake to righteousness. He cannot, in the absence of faith, awaken in himself holier emotions, by his own mere efforts. Truth believed is effectual, and he must bring himself under its influence, avoiding the "general error, which consists in considering rather *how* we believe than *what* we believe."

In the conclusion of this chapter, we may remark that if a correct definition has been given of faith, it is unsafe to believe and trust any thing which has not *truth for its foundation.* "All that confidence which is unsupported by evidence, held fast by so many, is not faith, but *presumption*, or *delusion.* If faith is the belief of the truth, then whatever I believe ought to be a truth, and a truth supported by evidence, prior to, and independently of, my believing it.—If that persuasion which I may have of my interest in Christ have any right to the name of faith, it must be a truth, and a truth capable of being proved by Scripture evidence at the time." It is very unsafe, therefore, to rely on dreams, impulses, impressions, and certain suggestions of Scripture without examining carefully their origin. The same remark is applicable to the persuasion that

certain unbelievers will be converted, and that revivals will commence at particular times and places. These impressions concerning unexisting events may sometimes happen to be well founded, but we should cautiously receive them as objects of trust. This prophetic faith, moreover, has a tendency to cause neglect of duty, diminish a sense of dependence, and abate the ardour of supplication.

Reliance on passages of Scripture, suggested to the mind at particular seasons, is an error to which young Christians are exposed, and so are all who suffer their feelings to direct them concerning duty. A judicious writer has exhibited this subject in a clear light. "The practice is perilous," he remarks, "and I have known many cases in which it has been very injuriously indulged. The text read, or recollected just at the time, has determined the person as to the state of his soul, or the path of duty: it has operated to the removal of his distress, or the solution of his doubt. But, though all the Scripture is true in itself, many parts of it may be erroneous in their application to the present case of any individual. The suitableness of the part occurring, is commonly supposed to prove that it is immediately from God; but this suitableness is the question; and the man who decides it, is the party interested, and therefore the most liable to mistake. The *will* of God may really call us off from a

pursuit, when by this means the *word* of God is urging us on. Jonah was probably encouraged when he came down to the sea-side, to find a ship just ready to sail: when a man is in a wrong course, a piece of Scripture, unexpectedly met with, may keep him much in the same way. The angel of the Lord commissioned Gideon, to go and deliver Israel, as he was threshing wheat: a man engaged in the same work feels an inclination to go forth and preach, but has some little doubt as to his sufficiency and success. When lo! these words come to his mind, "Arise, for the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour," and his doubts are scattered like dust before the wind. A good old man used to exhort people to live by the ten commandments, and not by impulses; and he used to tell how he got free from delusion himself. When he was young, he was poor and pious, and thought all suggestions, in Scripture style, came from heaven. Walking in the field, in want of firing, by the side of a neighbour's hedge, he wished for some of it to burn: instantly the word came—*In all this Job sinned not*, and in faith of this, he began to make free with his neighbour's wood. But, happily he discovered his error; tried the application of the text by the command: Thou shalt not steal, or, as the relater remarks, the word of God might have led him out of the church into the jail."

This writer further remarks on the improper use of Scripture that the word of God has awful passages; and there are persons of melancholy temperament, or labouring under dejection from temporary causes. Such persons, by a principle of association, are always prone to attract towards themselves every thing of a dreadful nature. What wonder, therefore, when a threatening of Scripture strikes the mind in such a case, if the man, viewing it as a divine intimation, is plunged into distraction or despair? We cannot love the word of God too much, nor consult it too often. But we are to "search the Scriptures;" and it is to "dwell in us richly in *all wisdom*." We are not to turn it into a kind of lottery, or to use it as a spell or a charm; but to understand what we read. We are not to take it separately, but connectedly: and if we would be directed by it as to our duty, or satisfied by it as to our state, we are to peruse its contents with diligence, humility, and prayer; to observe the passages that refer to persons of our character or condition, that describe the temptations to which we are exposed, or the trials under which we labour."*

*Jay's Remarks on the Character and Narrative of Rev. John Clark.

CHAPTER V.

ON REGENERATION.

THE Spirit of inspiration has neither made a formal distinction between the prominent doctrines of the gospel, nor digested them into a regular series. They are stated sometimes in one form, sometimes in another, according to the character or circumstances of the hearer. Occasionally, a doctrine is exhibited by itself, but generally each includes the rest, and the whole circle of Christian graces. The great change from death to life, which we are now to contemplate, is comprehended in saving faith; in genuine repentance; in holy obedience. The divine influence, which produces the spiritual creation, is necessary to incite and enable us to perform the duties involved in each of these requirements. This is always implied, and in some instances is explicitly stated. (Phil. 1. 29: Acts 5. 31.: 11. 18: 2 Tim. 2. 25: Heb. 6. 6: Rom. 6. 17.)

But Christ thought it important, in his discourse with Nicodemus, to fix the attention distinctly on that renewing of the heart which he declared to be indispensably necessary as a means of admission into his kingdom. (John 3. 3.)

This change, in common language, is called regeneration, i. e. a new birth. The word is used but twice in the New Testament; (Mat. 19. 28: Tit. 3. 5.) and in the first passage its meaning depends upon punctuation. Christ may mean either that those who had followed him in the regeneration, in the renewing of their minds, should be rewarded; or that his followers should be rewarded when he should regenerate, create anew, the heavens and the earth. But although the word regeneration is used but once as certainly declaring the necesssity of a new heart in order to salvation, yet other words of equivalent meaning are frequently employed. Christians are said to be born of God—born of the Spirit—born again by the word of God—begotten by the word of truth—created anew in Christ unto good works—quickened from a state of spiritual death, and to be saved by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. (1 John 1. 13: 1 John 2. 29: 3. 9: 1 Pet. 1. 23: James 1. 18: Eph. 2. 1–5.)

We shall consider now the *nature*, *evidence*, *duty*, and *necessity* of regeneration.

I. *The nature of regeneration.*

This part of our subject may be regarded as a key-stone in theology. Every view we take of it must have an important bearing on many other essential doctrines, and on religious duties in general. I shall confine my attention chiefly to matters of fact, for the obvious reason that to

carry our researches further would be not only unprofitable, but unauthorized by the example of Christ. What, then, is the agency of the Spirit, and what are the means employed in accomplishing the new creation? Are any new powers and faculties added to the soul, or are the already existing powers merely brought into the voluntary service of God? The latter only, if our own consciousness is competent to testify. Some of the disciples of John, who were true believers, said, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. (Acts 19. 2.) There are many also who have been fully taught the existence and office of the Holy Spirit, and who have themselves experienced his renewing influence, without apprehending, at the time, the truth that they had passed from death to life. They were sensible that their views and feelings, in regard to religious subjects, had undergone an important change; but, not believing themselves to be born again, they supposed the change to have been effected by the clearer knowledge of truth and duty resulting from an unusual investigation of the Scriptures, and the instructions of their pious friends. When convinced by the subsequent fruits of the Spirit that they had indeed been created anew in Christ Jesus, they were astonished to find that the marvellous passage from darkness to light could have been effected so silently as to escape their observa-

tion. Many a genuine convert to righteousness has, for this very reason, doubted the fact of his admission into the kingdom of God. Now, if there is any physical change, or renovation of constitutional properties, in regeneration, it is rational to conclude that this must be a matter of consciousness. But no such thing comes within the range of our experience. We cannot detect the least suspension of voluntary agency. We are not conscious of any influence exerted upon us which supersedes the necessity or duty of reconciling ourselves to God. (2 Cor. 5. 20.) If we had not "heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," we should suppose that regeneration is accomplished solely by the power of truth. The plain inference, therefore, from the testimony of experience is, that the new creation must be a moral change, a transfer of the affections from the world to God, produced in entire consistency with the laws of moral agency.

This view of the subject is confirmed by a consideration of the *means employed in regeneration*. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth. (James 1. 18.) It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Cor. 1. 21.) In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. (1 Cor. 4. 15.) Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. (1 Pet. 1. 23.) Sanctify

them through thy truth; thy word is truth. (John 17. 17.) Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8. 32.) These passages are sufficient to establish the generally admitted fact, that the word of truth is the principal means which the Spirit employs in renewing the heart. It has become a question of great importance whether the truth is the only means. I would not positively assert, while so many eminent and pious men affirm the contrary, that the Holy Ghost exerts no influence upon the mind, except through this appropriate medium. He is an invisible agent, and the mode of his operation is beyond our comprehension.

> The inward call; the sanctifying dew,
> Coming unseen, unseen departing thence;
> Anew creating all, and yet not heard;
> Compelling, yet not felt:—mysterious these.

But, although the agency of the Spirit is mysterious, yet facts on this subject, revealed by inspiration, and human consciousness, can be understood. The Scriptures assert that we are born of the incorruptible word, made effectual by the demonstration and power of the Spirit. (1 Cor. 2. 4: 1 Pet. 1. 12.) It is not intimated that the Spirit exerts any other influence in the work of regeneration except through the instrumentality of the word. If the truth cannot be made effectual to the new creation, why do not some of the inspired teachers inform us of the impor-

tant fact? But their language obviously implies the contrary. They tell us, invariably, that the Spirit renews and sanctifies the heart through the truth; and, if their words are to be received in the common acceptation, we must conclude that his agency is exerted in no other way. We find at least no satisfactory evidence that this is a wrong construction of their language; and we cannot conceive it possible that a voluntary and accountable being should be constrained to render a willing obedience to his Maker, except through the force of truth. This will be more fully considered when we come to the *duty* of regeneration. Let us inquire now if the view we have taken of the subject do not accord with the divine administration, and the moral nature of man. In all his requirements, God never overlooks our accountable character, but treats us as responsible beings. He sets before the rebellious the blessing and the curse, and urges them to choose life. He makes them acquainted with their guilt and ruin, and the way of escape through his redeeming mercy, and entreats them to repent, believe, obey, and be saved. He uses means for their recovery adapted to their accountable nature. What other means could he employ? Must not our hopes, fears, affections, and passions, be addressed? Must we not be constrained by a moral influence to choose and to do that which is right? Must we not be

controlled by motives presented to the mind?—by the truth assailing the conscience and the heart with its resistless terrors, subduing tenderness, persuasive rewards? What but revealed truth, setting in contrast the inflexibility of the law and the redemption from its curse, is adapted to the present state of man, and appropriate to the healing of his spiritual diseases? We can conceive of no other adequate or suitable remedy. God has provided no other. He has given us his living and abiding word, the means, through obedience, of setting us free from the dominion of sin—the grand and effectual "medicine for the mind diseased."

But it is objected that the word of truth tends only to increase the enmity of the carnal mind the more clearly it is exhibited, and therefore can never be made capable of producing the new creation. The fact is admitted that the hatred of the sinner is inflamed against God by the conviction of his guilt and ruin, while he cleaves to his iniquity, and has an erroneous view of the divine character. But may not the whole truth—his own ill-desert, the justice of God in his condemnation, the love of Christ, and his offers of free salvation, soften and transform the heart of stone? Joseph's brethren hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him; and yet the whole truth, in relation to his character and their own, changed that cruelty into weeping, and confes-

sion, and brotherly love. God saith, Is not my word like as a fire? and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? (Jer. 23. 29.) Now, if this be true of the word—if it is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, (Heb. 4. 12.) may not the Omnipotent Spirit make it effectual to the renewing of the soul? It can be nothing less than presumption to deny this. When the sinner is convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, his distress becomes often insupportable, and life would fail if God in mercy did not grant him deliverance from the fire of his word. It was truth that pricked the Jews in their heart, and compelled them in their agony to inquire what they must do. It was truth that hurried the traitorous Judas to phrenzy and self-destruction. And truth is equally adapted to soothe the tumultuous passions, and prostrate the returning prodigal in love and wonder at his Father's feet. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit. (1 Pet. 1. 22.) For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which *effectually*

worketh also in you that believe. (1 Thess. 2. 13.) We must conclude, in view of all this testimony, that the new creation is effected through the instrumentality of the word, under the accompanying energy of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. In this appropriate and effectual manner, as I apprehend, the understanding is enlightened; the things of God and of the world are presented in their true light; and the thoughts, desires, and affections, are turned from their former course, and fixed on new objects. The man has become a new creature, because his views and feelings are entirely changed. He loves the things which he once hated, and hates the things which once he loved. The sudden and glorious transformation often leads the convert to imagine that the works and the word of the Lord have undergone some marvellous change. But he has been looking hitherto at heavenly things at best through an inverted telescope. Now, the glass is properly applied, and the glories of the spiritual world burst upon the astonished and enraptured vision. Not a single beauty has been created in the moral landscape. All existed before; but it was unseen, unfelt. No new faculty has been created in the mind ravished with these recently discovered glories. The eye has been unsealed—the ear has been opened to the voice of peace—the soul has awakened to the proper exercise of its powers.

We are now to consider,

II. *The evidence of regeneration.*

The wind bloweth where it listeth, said the Saviour, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. The wind is a viewless agent, but its effects are visible. So the effects of the Spirit are manifest, although he comes and departs unseen. His influence, therefore, can be known only from his operations, as in the case of the wind which is made an emblem of the Spirit's agency. We must inquire, then, whether we exhibit the fruits of holiness, in order to know if we have been born of the word. If the great change is accomplished, it will appear in newness of life. This is the scriptural test. By their fruits ye shall know them. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (Rom. 8. 14.) But there is a variety of experience, corresponding, in some degree, with the natural temperament and the effects of previous education. Some have deeper impressions and clearer views than others. The sun of righteousness, to some, breaks suddenly forth; and "darkness visible," in a moment, is turned into the brightness of noon-day. To others, a faint light appears, like the first dawn of morning, which gradually increases till the new heavens and the new earth become distinctly visible. Regeneration itself is an instantaneous change,

following the preparatory work of conviction; for he who lays aside his enmity must necessarily exercise the opposite feeling of love. But the evidence of the new creation is not the same in all cases. It will soon appear, however, if unbelief do not prevent. And, when we have the witness of the Spirit in ourselves, we need not be anxious to know the time we were renewed. This is not required, neither is it safe to trust to any supposed time of conversion. The life must bear testimony. This is enough. We do not think it necessary, as a means of proving that we love our friends, to know when we first began to love them. And it has been well remarked, in relation to the evidence of regeneration, that "no man can doubt that the sun shines at noon, because he did not see it rise." It is not important to dwell longer on this part of the subject; because the evidence of faith, of repentance, of obedience, is evidence of regeneration; and this has been already described.

III. *The duty of regeneration.*

The doctrine has long prevailed that we are passive in the new creation, and that therefore it cannot be our duty, in the proper sense of the word, to renew our own hearts. But God has declared that the sinner is under obligations to do this—that it is literally and truly his *duty*. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Ezek. 18. 30, 31.) Is not this command immediate and direct? and must not the language be literally interpreted? Much pains has been taken to evade the force of this positive injunction; but it is unavailing. Is repentance unto life a duty? Does God mean what he says when he commands all men every where to repent, on penalty of eternal perdition for non-compliance? But repentance necessarily involves regeneration; for, if no man can see the kingdom of God till he is born again, and if godly sorrow for sin is unto salvation, it must include the new birth. In the passages just quoted from Ezekiel, repenting and casting away transgressions are synonymous with making the new heart. If the duty of regeneration, therefore, is denied, the duty of repentance must also be denied. Every step toward the performance of the one is a step toward the performance of the other. And we are as much dependent on the creating influence of the Spirit in repentance as we are in the new birth. Christ is exalted at the right hand of the Father to give repentance, no less than the new creation. This is too plain to be gainsayed or resisted. The same things are equally true of saving faith. He that believeth shall be saved—is passed from death to life.

Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ to believe on him. (Phil. 1. 29.) Faith, therefore, includes regeneration, and implies the necessity of the same divine influence for its exercise. If the one is a duty, the other is no less. The same is true of the obedience of any spiritual requirement; for the new heart is necessary to holy obedience. By denying the duty of regeneration, therefore, I see not but we must deny every other duty which requires for its performance a right state of the heart. But the Scriptures, in every form, command the sinner to do that which involves the creating of himself anew. "Cleanse first that which is *within* the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. *Put off* all these; anger, wrath, malice. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and *purify* your hearts, ye double-minded. Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? Wash you, make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."

Now, if regeneration is merely giving God the affections, that is, voluntarily serving him, and employing for his glory all the powers and faculties with which we were created, it is a plain

duty to make to ourselves a new heart, and a right spirit. But if this change requires a renewal of constitutional properties—if it implies that there are obstacles which cannot be removed by the sincere desire of obedience, then the duty of making a new heart vanishes, and with it every other spiritual duty. Let the Scriptures decide what is truth in this important case. But let not the sinner perish leaning on philosophy, falsely so called. If the truth makes him free, he must be the voluntary slave of sin: for truth can neither give nor take away the capability of acting from choice, nor annihilate the duty of choosing and doing righteousness.

I am not denying the fact of the sinner's dependence on the gracious and sovereign influence of the Spirit. Of *his own will* begat he us. It is his office to take away the stony heart, and give the heart of flesh; and the ruined must submit themselves to his mercy, and beseech him to create in them a clean heart, and to renew within them a right spirit. But the need of his influence arises from the inexcusable blindness, and obstinacy, and wickedness, of the lost; and therefore he may have mercy on whom he will. "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Ye *will not* come to me, that ye may have life. There are some of you that believe not: therefore said I

unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." The renewing of the Holy Ghost, then, is a great, a sovereign and gracious work, rendered necessary by the voluntary depravity of the sinner; for free agency is a constitutional attribute. It can never be taken from us so long as we remain rational and accountable. It could not be lost at the fall, and therefore cannot be restored by grace. The emphatic language of the Scriptures, pronouncing the sinner *dead* in trespasses and sins, and possessing a heart hardened like the *adamant stone*, denotes merely his destitution of spiritual life—his dreadful insensibility to eternal things. The negligent but Christian church in Sardis had a name to live and was *dead*. (Rev. 3. 1.) Such expressions, therefore, are not to be understood literally as if a dead *soul* were like a dead *body*.

IV. *The necessity of regeneration.*

If mere outward reformation, or the formal observance of religious rites and duties, could fit us for heaven, we should not need the special influence of the Spirit. But the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees will not save us. The application of water in baptism will not cleanse the soul from pollution. This ordinance, except in its spiritual meaning, as defined by the apostle, (1 Pet. 3. 21.) must be unavailing. The "new creature" only can enter the kingdom

of grace. By the washing of regeneration—the purifying influence signified by baptism—are we saved; not by works of righteousness which we have done. The necessity of being created anew, after the image of true holiness, is evident from the explicit testimony of Christ; (John 3. 3.) but depravity is the only ground of this necessity. We need not repeat the arguments by which the truth has been demonstrated, that the natural heart is entirely destitute of holy love. It will be sufficient merely to illustrate the unfitness of the unregenerate for heaven, by contrasting the world with the kingdom of Christ. What, then, is the purity, and what the employments of the heavenly hosts? Inspiration has told us of the gates of pearl, and the streets of gold; of the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God; of the glory of God and the Lamb, superseding the necessity of sun and moon; of the crowns, the palms, the white robes of the conquerors; of the unutterable joys of perfect innocence and love for ever, for ever; of the spotless purity which shall not be contaminated by the entering in of any thing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. But neither the sublimest elevation of thought, nor the most dazzling lustre of imagery, can shadow out the holiness and bliss of heaven. Compare now with

this description, the selfishness, and oppression, and wickedness of this ruined world. Can the unwashed and unregenerated sinner be fit for the society of God, and holy angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect?

In the kingdom of God, he that is *least*, most humble, is *greatest*. Is it the natural disposition of man to esteem others better than himself? Whence then cometh envy, and slander, and unrighteous ambition, and contempt of the poor?—Whence come wars and fightings, and perfidy? Can the heart which burns with ardent desire for the honour of men, and the pleasures of sin, be satisfied with the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit? Can it be content with the lowest seat in the kingdom of grace?

In heaven the love of God constitutes the everlasting song.

Does this holy love so fill the heart of the natural man that he can joyfully ascribe all praise to God, and respond for ever to the anthem of the celestial hosts: "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but to thy name give glory?" Does he give evidence of this by the spiritual reverence of the Sabbath, calling the holy of the Lord honourable? Does he love prayer and meditation, and the communion of saints? Can he say: Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it? (Psa. 119. 140.) Oh! how do reason

and conscience lift up their voice with the voice of Jehovah, and the voice of his rejected Son: My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. (Zech. 11. 8.) I know you that ye have not the love of God in you. (John 5. 42.) How then can the transgressor, unwashed in the fountain set open for sin and uncleanness, be happy in heaven? "The happiness of heaven is holiness, and to talk of being happy without holiness is as apparent absurdity as to talk of being *well* without *health*, or of being *saved* without *salvation*." I ask the unsanctified, what would you do in that world of bliss? Could you dwell with unspeakable joy amid the unclouded glories of the Deity? You cannot love his perfections as they shine on the page of revelation, and obscurely appear in the life of his children. Can you gaze with ecstasy on the robes of light which adorn the risen Saviour? You would not trust him with your salvation, and have nothing to admire in the riches of his grace. Will you stand in the multitude of the redeemed, and be ravished with the melody of their golden harps? They will turn away as from an enemy of Him whose name is the glory of their song. Whither will you wander in search of employment, or rest? Forsaken and neglected, you must sit down in the streets of the golden city, a solitary stranger, and be compelled to exclaim:

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven!
Me miserable! which way shall I fly,
Infinite wrath and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is hell!—myself am hell!

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN."

CHAPTER VI.

DIRECTIONS TO THE INQUIRER.

THE doctrines and duties of the Scriptures, as has been already remarked, are not arranged in systematic order. They are stated in different forms, and in a variety of phraseology. It is important, therefore, that these apparently dissimilar instructions, addressed to sinners, should be collected together and harmonized. The following are the principal:

When the convicted jailor inquired what he must do to be saved, Paul and Silas answered: "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." When the many, who "were pricked in their heart," on the day of Pentecost, said: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter replied: "*Repent*, and be *baptized* every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." To Simon the sorcerer in the gall of bitterness, the same apostle said: "*Repent* of this thy wickedness, and *pray* God; if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." To the Jews, whom he had charged with the denial of the Holy One, and the killing of the Prince of Life, Peter said: "*Repent*, and be *converted*, that your sins may

be blotted out." In the commission given to the apostles by the Head of the Church, the promise is: "He that *believeth* and is *baptized*, shall be saved."

Not unfrequently, sinners are directed to perform the *practical* duties of religion. A young man of great possessions came to Christ, saying: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Christ replied: "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come take up thy cross and follow me." To the lawyer who made the same inquiry: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ replied: What is written in the law? He answered, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself. Jesus said to him, This do and thou shalt live." To the soldiers who demanded of Christ, saying: And what shall *we* do? He answered: Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. (Luke 3. 14.)

In the prophets, *general* directions to obedience are frequently given: Wash you, make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. (Isa. 1. 16.) Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

(Ezek. 18. 30.) Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. (Isa. 1. 19, 20: 55. 7.)

So various are the answers given in the Scriptures to the great inquiry: What must I do to be saved?—*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—believe and be baptized—repent and be baptized—repent and be converted—repent and pray—make you a new heart and a new spirit—cleanse your hands and purify your hearts—give to the poor, take up the cross and follow Christ—cast away all your transgressions—love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.*

These directions, expressed in so many forms, may seem to be contradictory, but they are substantially the same. Considered as spiritual requirements, they are connected like the links of a chain. In the answer to the jailor, *faith* alone is mentioned; but this includes and produces the other Christian graces. It works by love; purifies the heart; leads directly to the observance of the institutions of the gospel, and the obedience of its precepts. Godly *sorrow for sin* also implies and produces newness of life. It

implies the exercise of faith, charity, and the performance of the practical duties enjoined in the Scriptures, because repentance unto salvation cannot exist distinct from the other Christian graces. The same is true of *prayer* united with repentance. It is the offering up of sincere desires to God, and implies the existence of faith, with its kindred virtues. The exhortations, also, to *practical* duties, or to a *general* obedience of the divine commandments, contain an implied reference to repentance and faith; for we cannot truly obey any moral precept of the gospel without holiness of heart; and holiness is the fruit of "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." As it regards practical purposes, then, it amounts to the same thing, whether the sinner is directed to believe, or repent, or repent and pray, or make to himself a new heart, or purify his heart, or perform the spiritual duties of religion. These different instructions imply the same things, and every one of them includes the substance of all the rest. Says an excellent writer, to whom the reader is indebted for some of the ideas here advanced, "If I were called upon to express, in a summary manner, the spirit and substance of these several directions, I should say to the sinner, '*In the exercise of* FAITH *and* REPENTANCE, *enter* IMMEDIATELY *upon a life of* HOLY OBEDIENCE. Do this and you will be saved.' Immediate belief, immediate repentance,

and immediate obedience are commanded. By holy obedience I would be understood to mean, not only the affections of the heart, but the practical duties of life; not only internal feelings, but external actions."*

Now if these directions are given by the Spirit of Truth, they must be not only perfectly safe, but it is perilous to substitute for them the wisdom of men. God has appointed the watchman, and says: Thou shalt hear the word at *my* mouth, and warn them from *me*. (Ezek. 33. 7.)

I shall now, in view of these general instructions, describe some of the errors which are liable to retard, if they do not prevent the sinner's reconciliation with God. (1.) The inquirer may very naturally perplex himself with the question, 'How shall I *commence* the work of salvation? —in the performance of which of the various duties must I begin?' So long as he stands revolving this question, he will neglect every duty, and accomplish nothing. If the scriptural directions, specified above, have been correctly interpreted, it is of no particular consequence to which of them the attention is first directed. They are like rays of light flowing from a common centre —either of them, if implicitly followed, will conduct us to Christ. Suppose an insurrection breaks out under a monarchical government, and the king makes proclamation of pardon to the rebels,

* Christian Spectator, 1827, p. 11.

on conditions of submission and future loyalty. Those who are disposed to accept of mercy will not think it necessary to inquire which of the several duties included in submission ought *first* to be performed, whether confession, or sorrow, or thankfulness for the offer of pardon. Least of all will they think of retaining their weapons till they have decided so unimportant a query. The sinner has no more need to inquire which of the various duties, implied in reconciliation with God, must first be performed. The inspired teachers did not think it worth their while to solve this metaphysical puzzle. They probably did not, for this simple reason, that although there may be a natural order in the prescribed duties of religion, yet, from their inseparable connexion, the spiritual obedience of any command implies general obedience. "Divine truths are like chain-shot: they go together; and we need not perplex ourselves which should enter first; if any one enter it will draw the rest after it." It must still be kept in view, that every moral precept and every form of doctrine must be obeyed from the *heart*, if available to divine acceptance. The Pharisees were condemned and rejected, not for their outward obedience, which the Saviour approved, but for omitting the weightier matters; judgment, mercy and faith. The *form* of their religion was scrupulously exact, but it lacked the *power* of godliness. The anxious sinner ought to refrain from outward

transgression, and bring his conduct into external conformity to the law. He ought to do every thing which is obviously right, and avoid every thing obviously wrong. But he must not stop here: reconciliation with God, and the consequent salvation, absolutely require repentance, and faith, and newness of life. (2.) The convicted sinner is in danger of waiting what is wickedly called "*God's time.*" In view of his dependence on the Spirit of Grace, some, who ought to be better guides, have compared him to the man lying at the pool till the waters were troubled, and a friend, or compassionate stranger, should help him in. (John 5. 5–7.) But is there no essential difference between helpless infirmity, and the difficulties resulting from voluntary depravity? It was not the duty of the impotent man to step into the pool; is it not the duty of the sinner to repent and cast away his transgressions, that so iniquity shall not be his ruin! When there is a parallel between *natural* and *moral* impotence, then, and not till then, let this comparison be used. The Scriptures indeed speak of waiting on the Lord, but it is in the patient performance of duty and the meekness of Christian submission. They who *so* wait on Him shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. (Isa. 40. 31.) If this is waiting on the Lord, that is not a *bibli-*

cal direction, but a ruinous *delusion*, which bids the sinner remain in the strength of his rebellion, till God subdues him into obedience. In the multitude of instructions which the Scriptures contain, not one is found directing the sinner to tarry in his iniquities, till the grace of God fits him for the performance of duty. Every exhortation and command is immediate and peremptory: Repent—believe—obey. The theology of the Bible never sets duty and dependence at variance—never promises grace without obedience. The sinner, therefore, must wait for nothing, but enter immediately on known duty. *Seek* ye the Lord while he may be found, *call* ye upon him while he is *near;* let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (Isa. 55. 6, 7.) Strive (agonize) to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek (feebly and erroneously) to enter in, and shall not be able. (Luke 13. 24.) I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments. (Psa. 119. 60.) Here is no waiting for a new heart—no justification of the doctrine that every thing done before regeneration is sinful, and therefore it is useless to attempt obedience till the new heart is given. Christ does not tell the young man that he must be

created anew before he obeys the moral precepts; but "if thou wilt enter into life, *keep the commandments*—sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." And when the Saviour said to the Pharisees, Cleanse *first* that which is *within* the cup and the platter, viz. "extortion and excess;" he directed them to effect this inward cleansing by performing practical duties. "Give alms of such things as ye have; and behold all things are clean unto you." (Luke 11. 41.) I dwell at length on this important point, because the error I am endeavouring to remove furnishes a resting-place to the awakened and the unawakened sinner. 'I can do nothing till I have a new heart.' How then are you to be saved? You will not attempt to pray, till you can offer up a holy prayer! you will 'not try to repent, till the grace of repentance is given!' The sum of all is, you will do nothing till you become a Christian. The absurdity is as great as that of the simpleton in the Greek fable, who said, "I will not venture into the water till I have *learned to swim*." (3.) The awakened sinner is liable to place undue reliance on what is termed using *the means of grace*. Some will direct him to consider his ways; to read the Scriptures and pious books; to be punctual in his attendance on religious worship; and thus they encourage him, to "put himself in the way of receiving a blessing," when Christ passes by. It is true, indeed, that the means which God makes

effectual to salvation are adapted in themselves to produce a salutary influence, and for this reason the outward observance of them is better than total neglect. There is more probability that the man who pays an external regard to religious ordinances will be converted, than there would be if he should neglect the Sabbath and openly disregard the gospel. But although the instructions just noticed are important in their place, what have they to do with repentance and faith? Should we direct an obstinate child to pursue this course, in the hope of becoming reconciled with his injured father? Does not such counsel divert the attention from the one thing needful? The apostles never direct the sinner to do something preparatory to reconciliation with God, but immediately enforce the duty of repentance. (4.) It is very common for the anxious inquirer to seek for *deeper conviction*, in the hope that it will lead to *conversion*. This is an error. If he is fully sensible of his lost condition; if he realizes the truth, that in Christ alone is redemption through his blood; the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace, what need has he of more conviction? And what would it avail if he had? The fallen angels are fearfully convinced of their condemnation and ruin; but, although they *tremble*, they do not cease from rebellion. The sinner may realize the greatness of his guilt and

misery till flesh and heart fail, and yet not make his peace with God. Conviction is no Saviour. The Scriptures do not direct us to seek *conviction:* Seek ye the *Lord* while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. (5.) It is natural for the awakened sinner to conclude, from the greatness of salvation, that conversion requires considerable *length of time.* This dangerous error has been inculcated by many religious teachers. The passage from death to life, has been sometimes compared to the journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness to the promised land. But many of the Israelites died in the wilderness, and many sinners will perish in the way, if they are long in the work of reconciliation. There is no parallel between the transition from sin to holiness and the journey from Egypt to Canaan. The instances of conversion recorded in the Scriptures are sudden. So it was at the Pentecost; and so it was with the jailor. Even Paul, in his own judgment the chief of sinners, spent but three days between the terrible light of conviction, and the marvellous light of God's countenance. I do not remember a solitary case, under inspired teaching, of a long space between conviction and reconciliation. There need not be. The sinner accomplishes nothing, in the work of salvation, till the immediate purpose of submitting to Christ is formed and executed. Then the work is done at once.

Nothing is gained by waiting, but on the contrary, the heart is hardened—the Spirit is grieved—imminent danger is incurred. The Holy Ghost saith, (Heb. 3. 7.) *To-day*, if ye will hear his voice. (6.) The heavy laden sinner is liable to become weary with excessive anxiety, and *despair of salvation*. Every avenue of escape seems to be closed. The hail has swept away the refuges of lies—the waters have overflowed the hiding place—"shade after shade of deepening gloom descends," and misery seems to be his merited and inevitable portion. Thus it is that God, in his wisdom and mercy, shuts us up to the faith, and constrains us to throw ourselves down at the feet of Him who came to save that which was lost. Here salvation flows like a river, and "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (Matt. 11. 28.) Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isa. 1. 18.) Who can yield to despair, in the hearing of such promises? Perishing sinner! you must submit to God; and the moment this is done, salvation is yours. You know how to become reconciled with an innocent, injured friend.

Will you go to your injured, heavenly Father, with confession, and weeping, and submission, that you may receive his forgiveness, and fill the angels with joy? Will you do this *to-day?* The cares and allurements of the world are numerous —the devices of Satan are many—life is a vapour —the Spirit will not always strive. "Take heed; for mercy is like a rainbow, which God set in the clouds, to remember mankind: it shines here, as long as it is not hindered; but we must never look for it after it is night, and it shines not in the other world. If we refuse mercy here, we shall have justice to eternity."* "Satan labours," says the pious Gurnal, "to put off the sinner with delays. Flitting thoughts of repenting he fears not. He can give sinners leave to talk what they will do, so that he can keep such thoughts from coming to a head, and ripening to a present resolution. Few are in hell but what thought of repenting, only they could not fix upon the time in earnest, when to do it. The command saith: Now repent. God saith: "To-day, while it is called to day." Satan saith: "To-morrow." Which will you obey, God or him? Thou sayest, thou meanest at last to do it; then why not now? Which is the morrow thou meanest? Thou hast but a day in thy life, for aught thou knowest; where then canst thou find a morrow for repentance?"

*Jeremy Taylor.

CHAPTER VII.

ON ASSURANCE OF HOPE.

We often hear it said, by those who admit the divine origin of the Scriptures, that we do not know what will be our condition *in the future state.* If any one closes a vicious life, giving at the last moment no evidence of "good hope through grace," it is thought uncharitable to intimate that he has gone unprepared to his final account. This is practical Universalism; and the charity which forbids us to express an opinion in such a case is misnamed. What is the ground of this pretended ignorance of the future? It must imply either that the Scriptures are not given by inspiration of God, or that they do not fully reveal the destiny of the departed. If we have not a sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, (2 Pet. 1. 19–21.) we have no certain evidence that the soul will ever exist after death: but, if the Bible is divine, we do *certainly* know that he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. This is admitted by those with whom we are reasoning; and they must therefore mean that, although "it shall be well with the righteous and

ill with the wicked," yet we cannot fully distinguish, at their death, between the state of the one class and that of the other; and consequently do not know their condition in the world of spirits. It is indeed true that the ungodly sometimes die with an illusory beam of hope, like the last flash of an expiring taper; and it is also true that, in some instances, the death of the righteous is so comfortless, and attended by so many mysterious circumstances, that we may say, in the uninspired yet beautiful and true language of some reputed Solomon: In the sight of the unwise, they seemed to die: and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction:—but they are in peace. For, though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality. (Wisdom of Solomon 3. 2–4.)

It is still further admitted that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: "Who can know it?" But, however liable we may be, from this source, to deceive ourselves and others, it is none the less true that the Searcher of Hearts does enlighten and assure the faithful, and has made plain the difference between the narrow and the broad way. He has so delineated the traits of Christian character that it may be distinguished from a counterfeit. And if the righteous will infallibly be saved, and the evidence of Christian character may be

known, the full assurance of hope must be attainable.

I am now to show that this is a *scriptural* doctrine.

1. A correct view of the divine perfections would prepare us to admit its truth, even if it were not confirmed by positive testimony. We cannot suppose that God would leave the duties he requires of his accountable subjects so undefined that they could not distinguish between obedience and disobedience. He commands us, under penalty of his everlasting displeasure, to obey the gospel of his Son. Has he given us no means of determining what this gospel requires?—no means of ascertaining whether we have, or have not fulfilled its precepts? How then, can we be without excuse for sin, and speechless at the judgment, if found estranged from God? If the plea is well grounded that the good hope cannot be distinguished from the confidence which, in the hour of need, "is cut off as the foam upon the water," it follows that God must be charged with having given us an *unintelligible* revelation. And this amounts to the fact that he has not at all revealed his will. Such a thought is unspeakably offensive to the High and Holy One of Israel.

2. *There are many passages which imply, some directly and others indirectly, the truth of the doctrine under consideration.*

The warnings, threatenings, injunctions to watchfulness, invitations, exhortations to obedience, and the promises, suspending salvation on the exercise of faith, imply indirectly, but conclusively, that the Christian hope may be known. And this hope, says the apostle, we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, (Heb. 6. 19.)—language intimating that it may be ascertained, whether we are tossed about by the waves of doubtfulness and passion, like a ship unmoored, or are at rest in the peaceful haven. Another apostle says: We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4. 16—18.) This implies that the Christian may have that measure of sincere love to God, which gives him the evidence and assurance of being an heir of salvation. If it be not so, the constant fear of falling short of heaven through a delusive hope, will destroy the peace of the most eminent disciple of Christ. We shall be shut out from the joy and peace of believing, and cannot "rejoice in the Lord alway," for we cannot know that we are his. We can derive no

support under the burden of present trials, from looking forward to "the building of God; the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" because we can have no assurance that we shall enter into that eternal dwelling, when "our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved." Blot out the truth that we cannot attain to the full assurance of hope, and the consolation and the glory of the gospel are departed. We are doomed to an anxiety, remediless and intolerable, concerning our future destiny; and a cloud, darker than the world has seen, is spread over the throne of the Almighty. But there *is* no such cloud round about the throne. The godly are assured of their adoption. They are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption. (Ephes. 4. 30.) The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. (2 Tim. 2. 19.) Other passages imply directly the truth that there is an assurance of hope. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates, disapproved? (2 Cor. 13. 5: Coloss. 1. 22.) Of what utility is self-examination, if it conduct us to no certain result? Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. (2 Pet. 1. 10.) We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto

the end. (Heb. 6. 11.) Have these apostles, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, expressed a desire that their Christian brethren should diligently seek an unattainable object?

3. *The doctrine, so often implied, is established by direct testimony.*

The apostles speak of themselves and their fellow Christians in express terms: We *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2 Cor. 5. 1.) Hereby do we *know* that we know him, if we keep his commandments. (1 John 2. 3.) We *know* that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. We *know* that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. We *know* that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. (1 John 2. 20: 3. 2: 3. 14: 5. 19, 20.) With this proof, the reader must be satisfied that believers may possess an unhesitating and sure confidence that they are the children of God, and consequently heirs of the great salvation. The primitive saints had this assurance; and, if we are disciples of Christ, the same

Spirit beareth witness with *our* spirit that *we* are the children of God: and if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. (Rom. 8. 16.) I do not say that all who profess the Christian religion have this assurance—nor that all *real* Christians have this assurance—nor that any, at all times, are confident of their adoption into the household of faith. I have only illustrated and defended what the Scriptures have explicitly taught—that *every* Christian *may* attain to the full assurance of hope unto the end.

We are now prepared to consider the means necessary to the possession of this unwavering confidence.

He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life. (John 3. 36.) The full assurance of hope, therefore, can be derived only from evidence of Christian character. What is called "the faith of assurance," if the language has any meaning, must be a full belief or confidence of our good estate; and this confidence must depend entirely on the certainty of our adoption into the family of Christ; otherwise it is delusion. The inquiry, then—if he that believeth shall be saved—is simply, How shall we know that we are *Christians?* This is ascertained by examination and prayer; by the spirit of devotedness to Christ, and willingness to obey his commands; by comparing our character with that of the righteous, as drawn by the pen of inspiration. These are important

as general directions, but the evidence of Christian hope is derived chiefly from obedience of the gospel. "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Some of the saints here addressed (Heb. 6. 11, 12.) had become, with good reason, confident of salvation; and Paul desired that they all should attain to the same confidence. According to his exhortation, this was to be effected by the diligent cultivation of every Christian virtue—by the performance of every known duty. The same faithfulness in spiritual obedience will conduct *us* to the same assurance of hope. But there is an important idea in the latter part of the passage just quoted, which should not be overlooked—"full assurance of hope unto the *end*." He that endureth to the *end* shall be saved. (Mat. 10. 22.) We must not be satisfied with any *periodical* frames or feelings, but endeavour to carry along, through our whole pilgrimage, the evidence of adoption. We must walk with God, if we would make our calling and election sure—must stand with our loins girt about, and our lamps trimmed and burning. Unless we are alway prepared, the Master of the house, who cometh suddenly and unperceived, (Rev. 3. 3: 16. 15.) may find us sleeping, and give us our portion with the fearful, the slothful,

and the unbelieving. It shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil. (Zeph. 1. 12.)

In thus directing the attention to practical duties, as a means of obtaining the evidence and assurance of hope, I would by no means discourage frequent self-examination, and the most cautious inquiries respecting the state of the affections. With great solicitude, and earnest prayer for divine light, we ought to examine the heart—the fountain whence issue the streams of life. But it is a great and common error to sit painfully watching the nature of our affections and feelings, to the neglect of practical duties. We cannot in this way decide the question of Christian character. It is only in the *exercise* of spiritual graces that we can be sensible of their existence; and the field for their exercise is practical obedience. True it is that the heart should be right in the sight of God: this is an immediate requirement. But we are not to wait for the proof of regeneration, before we venture on the performance of practical duties. "John does not say to those whom he calls a generation of vipers, First repent, then ascertain that you *have* repented, and *then* reform; but he tells them at once to bring forth *fruits* meet for repentance. Our Lord does not say to the young man, First

learn that you have a new heart, and *then* obey; but, If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.—How is a man to know that his heart, his affections, are right, if they excite to no holy purposes? And how can he know that his *purposes* are holy, if they all relate to the future, and have no reference to the *present* performance of duty? He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous; not he who merely *intends* to do his duty at some future period."*

These are *scriptural* and therefore *wise* directions. They contain the only true test of Christian character, the Saviour himself being judge. Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? (Matt. 7. 16.) We cannot prove ourselves, whether we be in the faith, by any other than this natural and perfect rule. The Scriptures have given us no other standard by which to determine either our own character or that of others. "Christ nowhere says, Ye shall know the tree by its *leaves* or *flowers;* or, Ye shall know men by their *talk;* or, Ye shall know them by the good story they tell of their *experiences;* but, By their *fruits* shall ye know them."†

The great and good man, whose words are here quoted, says of this excellent rule, which

* Christian Spectator, 1827, p. 12.

† Edwards' Works, vol. iv. p. 354.

the Saviour has laid down: By many it is not deemed sufficient; but they must needs resort to other signs: and "woful are the mischievous consequences," he adds, which have resulted from "this arrogant setting up of the wisdom of men above the wisdom of Christ." Among "other signs" than those which Christ has given, we may notice the following: willingness to unite with some particular church—zeal for forms of worship, and a precise manner of observing the external ordinances of the gospel—belief in peculiar tenets—Pharisaical gravity—conformity to prescribed fashions and qualities of apparel. Many professedly pious people lay great stress on these unimportant peculiarities, and thus retard the progress of vital piety.*

* The supposed evidence of conversion last mentioned often perplexes the young Christian. Some plain and pious people seem to think that a change of *heart* must needs produce a change of *dress;* and they are uncharitable if they do not witness this fruit of faith. It may be important to remark that God is a being of perfect *taste.* This is evident from the symmetry of the human form—from the starry heavens—from the beauties of the landscape—the fascinating form and blended colors of many a flower—it is evident from all his works. Is it right in this respect to imitate, in any degree, our Father in heaven? Has he forbidden us to follow *here* his example? A flower of the gaudiest hue, plucked from the fields, might be used innocently as an ornament: I know not but the same might be said of the *imitative* flower. The human mind is fitted to admire the beauties of nature and of art. And it is obvious that there is an important connexion between *natural* and *moral* purity. Personal cleanliness and neatness; regard to comfort and decency

These tests of human device may be profitably dispensed with, but the fruits of righteousness both ascertain and form the Christian character. By a becoming faithfulness, therefore, in obeying the moral precepts of the gospel, every Christian may be infallibly confident of his good estate. The hand of the diligent maketh rich in *spiritual*, no less than in *temporal* things. It is important to add, however, that when I speak of the full assurance of hope, I do not mean to exclude occasional doubts and fears, and the trials of faith. The apostle Peter says: If ye call on

in domestic concerns; a correct taste in all the arts, occupations, and business of life, exert an undoubted influence in the elevation of moral character. Witness the truth of this among Christianized heathen, and in villages restored by a revival from the degradation of gross iniquity. Religion carries in its train every *earthly* as well as *spiritual* enjoyment and delight. Negligence of proper business, carelessness, slovenliness, want of taste, are neither gospel requirements nor evidence of Christian character. Whitfield fell into this error in the beginning of his course; but afterwards, on the review, said, in his emphatic manner: "Once I thought religion required me to be *nasty*." I apprehend that true religion corresponds very nearly with *correct taste* on these subjects. Too much has been made of what the apostles (1 Tim. 2. 9: 1 Pet. 3. 3.) say of female ornaments.* The Jewish women surpassed decency and taste, as much as religion, in their adorning. (See Isa. 3. 18–23.) The apostles designed to guard *godly* women against such foolish extravagance. But *little* is said of forms and fashions of apparel in the Scriptures; and it is unimportant compared with vital godliness. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1. 27.)

* See Prov. 31. 10–29.

the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. (1 Pet. 1. 17.) It is a dangerous sign, to be wholly destitute of doubts and apprehensions. Reader is this your case?

> Come then, a still small whisper in your ear;
> He has no hope, that never had a fear;
> And he who never doubted of his state—
> He may perhaps—perhaps he may too late.

But there may be still a prevailing confidence, and we should give ourselves no rest, till we can say of Christ, with the long doubting, but finally assured Thomas: My Lord, and my God! The case of this disciple is not cited as an example which should be implicitly followed. We ought to avoid his criminal unbelief, and guard against his error, in seeking unexpected evidence of the Christian hope. The Saviour will no more assure the hesitating disciple, by exhibiting "his hands and his feet." (Luke 24. 40.) No voice from heaven will be heard, telling us we are safe. This we must learn by faithfulness in our Master's service. Are we submissive to the will of God? Are we hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Are we sincerely endeavouring to obey the commandments? Are we willing to assume the responsibilities of a Christian profession, as soon as it becomes a known duty, taking

up the cross and following our Lord through the trials of spiritual warfare?* If these things are true of us, we need not fear, though the Sun of Righteousness be for a time obscured by a cloud. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. (Heb. 10. 35–37.) Be not afraid, only believe. (Mark 5. 36.) Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. (Psa. 37. 3.) Who is among you that feareth the Lord; that obeyeth the voice of his servant; that walketh

* The convert is sometimes deterred from making a public profession of faith by a misapprehension of the apostle's meaning in 1 Cor. 11. 29. The church in Corinth had been heathen previous to their conversion, and not understanding fully the design of the Lord's supper, they turned this sacred memorial of his sufferings into a riotous feast. Paul censures them severely, for celebrating so ignorantly, and in a manner so unbecoming its intention, the holy ordinance; assuring them that, in so doing, it would not be to their profit, but condemnation—for this is the meaning of the word translated *damnation*. He regarded them as Christians, although deserving punishment for their unchristian conduct. The apostle is not considering, therefore, the subject of making a vain profession; and although I would not diminish, in the estimation of any, the sacredness of the Lord's table, or the qualifications necessary to partake of its benefits, yet it may be known, that neither this epistle to the Corinthians, nor the Scriptures, make it an unpardonable sin, if we should happen to approach the ordinance without being, as we supposed ourselves to be, true disciples.

in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. (Isa. 50. 10.) The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. (Psa. 34. 18.)

In closing the subject, let me warn the Christian reader against the belief and propagation of the error which has been described. It dishonours God—involves revealed truth in obscurity—discourages self-examination and growth in grace—almost makes of none effect the warnings and exhortations of the gospel. It occasions the neglect of present duty; shuts out the consolations of piety; causes the children of a King to go mourning all their days. It affords the lukewarm and unbelieving a refuge from which we cannot drive them. They expect to be saved, and when urged to give a reason of their hope, reply that none are sure of their good estate. This great stumbling block can be removed only by maintaining the revealed doctrine that there is a full assurance of hope, and urging the saint and the sinner to give themselves no rest till they attain to this assurance. The word of the Lord is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path; and we may know whether we are groping in darkness, or treading the luminous path of life. Happy are they who dwell in the light, performing every practical duty. They shall "be crowned like the year that ends into its own circle; and

the fathers, and the children, the benefactors and the beneficiary, shall knit the wreath, and bind each other in the eternal enclosures and circlings of immortality."*

* Jeremy Taylor.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

It has been admitted by political writers that absolute monarchy would best secure the happiness of subjects, if a ruler could be found, uniting the requisite ability with perfect integrity. But such has been the abuse of power intrusted to man, that we are naturally prejudiced against *unlimited* control, emanating from any source. Probably there is, in the minds of many, some latent comparison between earthly rulers and the King of kings, which gives a forbidding aspect to the idea of absolute sovereignty. There is a general admission of the truth that God has a right to preside over his own *material* empire, and, in the common acceptation of the term, to govern his own *intelligent* creation. But the human mind is disposed to revolt at the thought that He should work *all* things after the counsel of his own will. (Ephes. 1. 11.) The strength of prejudice, in relation to this truth, will be diminished by a view of the divine perfections. Unlimited power may be safely trusted with a being of unlimited capacity and unbounded goodness. Such is the character of the high and holy *One* who bears the sceptre of universal dominion.

Says the apostle: Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, (the Creator of the starry heavens,) with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (James 1. 17.) If we can believe and love this declaration, we shall bless the Most High and honour him that liveth for ever, although his "dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou? (Dan. 4. 34, 35.)

But, whether we do, or do not love this truth, the absolute sovereignty of God is a solemn and unchangeable verity. The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? (Isa. 14. 27.) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Rom. 11. 34–36. with Isa. 40. 12–17: Rev. 4. 11.) I proceed, now, to consider divine sovereignty as related to the *salvation of sinners*. Exhibited in this form, it is called purpose, decree, foreordination, election,

and predestination—words expressing, so far as they concern the present subject, the same idea. But the meaning of all these terms has been grossly misapprehended, and consequently, the most violent prejudice has been excited against the doctrine which they are used to denote. Some writer very properly says: By PREDESTINATION, we neither understand fate, tyranny, or unreasonable acts of power. The English, Latin, and Greek word, rendered predestination, means in theology, (not what Johnson defines it, "a fatal decree," quoting Shakspeare as authority,) but it signifies deliberation with one's self, and resolving, and determining, and ordering beforehand, what shall be done, when it shall be done, where it shall be done, and how it shall be done, including all the causes and means, first and last, for its certain accomplishment." This is a correct definition of the several terms employed to express the sovereign pleasure of God in the salvation of his chosen people. They are all used to represent the simple fact, that God ALWAYS DESIGNED TO DO WHATEVER HE DOES.

The truth of this doctrine is now to be illustrated.

There is an important distinction between *foreknowledge* and *foreordination*, but they are intimately connected, and may be profitably considered together. By foreknowledge in God, we mean that he knows, or perceives future events;

that is, he knows whatever shall exist, before it has taken place. That which, to created beings, is future and uncertain, is so clearly perceptible by his Omniscient mind, that he "calleth those things which be not, as though they were." (Rom. 4. 17.) But the foreknowledge, or strictly speaking, the knowledge of God, should be considered in its two-fold relation to his own acts, and the conduct of his intelligent creatures. If God *designs* to do whatever he does, in the order of time, he first *purposed* what he would do, and thus *knew* what he would do, because he was sure that nothing could either induce or compel him to change his mind. Every rational being who acts intelligibly, must act in accordance with a previous purpose. In the highest sense is this true of Infinite Intelligence. It is written: Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. (Acts 15. 18.) He declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done. (Isa. 46. 10.) Now if God is perfect, he so wisely matured the plan of creation, and the future administration of his moral government, that he can change none of his own works for the better. No improvement can possibly be made in his counsels, and, therefore, he can have no inducement to vary them. And if he is perfect in knowledge, the fact, viewed in connexion with his other attributes, renders it evident that he must

be of one mind, and none can turn him—must be without variableness, or shadow of turning. As it concerns his *own* works, therefore, including every one of his acts, the predetermination of God seems necessary to the foreknowledge of his own conduct.

But, is the same foreordination of human actions necessary in order to the foreknowledge of these actions. Evidently not. The tender mercies of the Lord are over all his works; and he controls all things according to the counsel of his own will. But the accountable, and therefore, free agency of man, must occupy an important place in the divine administration. Some writers, in view of the perfections of God, and the passages which state in various forms, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, (2 Pet. 3. 18.) have supposed that all things are to him an "eternal NOW." It is difficult to comprehend the meaning of this expression, and its propriety admits of a question. If the *knowledge* of all things, or the certainty of every future event, has been always present in the divine Mind, is it true that *unexisting things* have been always present? In my apprehension, to say a thing is *present* which does not exist, involves the absurdity of affirming that an event precedes its own existence. The Scriptures assert that God, from the certainty of future events, calls things that are not *as though* they

were. This is intelligible—for we are accustomed to say that a thing is done, when there remains no doubt of its accomplishment—but to say that all things are an eternal *now*, perplexes the unlearned inquirer with the idea, that, in some unaccountable manner, his conduct must be traced back ages beyond the date of his own creation. I return to the inquiry: was it necessary, as a means of foreknowing our actions, that they should be predetermined? If we are acquainted with the habits and disposition of any individual, and are informed what temptations will assail him, or in what circumstances he will be placed, we can predict with tolerable accuracy what will be his conduct. We shall not hazard much by foretelling that the covetous man, and the drunkard, will pursue, if opportunity present, their accustomed course. But if we should know their intentions before they were executed; or, if from some secret place, we should see them in the *act* of fulfilling their previous purposes, our knowledge in this case would have no effect on their conduct. *Foreknowledge*, and *present* knowledge, and *after* knowledge, would be the same as it regards any influence on the voluntary conduct of these individuals. Now may not God, with his perfect knowledge of every human heart, and seeing, as he does, all the circumstances in which men will be placed, and perceiving the strength and bearing of every motive, be wholly

acquainted with their future conduct, and yet his knowledge have no effect upon their actions? This is a very rational supposition. It is evident that God could inform David, without any decree on the subject, that the inhabitants of Keilah would *voluntarily* deliver him into the hands of Saul, if he remained in the city. (1 Sam. 23. 12.) We cannot perceive in this instance, that foreknowledge, or present knowledge, should have any more effect on the men of Keilah, than after knowledge. The reflection, indeed, that God knows our intentions, may restrain us; but the question is, does this knowledge have the force of a decree, or merely exert a moral influence, and this, because we think of his character? Obviously, the divine foreknowledge of human conduct, in itself considered, has no effect upon us. So far as the *mere knowledge* of our future behaviour is concerned, I see not but we are as free as if God were *ignorant* of our purposes and actions.

But there arises now another very important inquiry: Does the knowledge of future events imply the *certainty* that they will be accomplished precisely as they are *foreseen?* Plainly and undeniably it does. Knowledge, whether it relate to the present, past, or future, is neither peradventure nor conjecture. Whatever is known must either already be or take place hereafter. If an event is doubtful, it cannot be fore-

seen, because it may or may not exist. There can be no truth in prophecy unless the events predicted are sure of accomplishment. On this ground, God calleth things that be not as though they were. And it is very evident that *knowledge* and the *certainty* of things foreknown, must stand or fall together. If, then, God foresees all events, they will infallibly be fulfilled. How, then, is this truth, so far as we are concerned, reconciled with free agency and accountability? This has been already explained. It is our choice to do the things which God has foreseen. And our conduct is free, as I have shown, whether it is *foreknown*, or *known*, or *unknown*.

We now advance another step, and meet a still further and more momentous question: Does God merely *foresee* who will believe on his Son and be saved; or does he *persuade* the ransomed, by a peculiar agency, to accept of mercy? Christ says, referring to those who should hereafter believe, Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold. (John 10. 16.) He calls unbelieving Gentiles and blaspheming Jews his sheep, because it was certain that they should hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow him. And when Paul, in the idolatrous city of Corinth, despaired of success in the gospel, and feared a violent death, the Lord spake to him by night in a vision: Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall

set on thee to hurt thee; for I have *much people* in this city. (Acts 18. 10.) The prediction was soon verified in the conversion of many sinners. Now, what made it certain that these licentious Corinthians, and the future sheep spoken of, should come into the fold of Christ? A zealous opposer of predestination says of the passages quoted, "They are called people of God who are still heathen, not because of any absolute decree of their election to eternal life, but because Christ saw that they were *disposed* to believe, and by faith become his people; as elsewhere he calls those his sheep who should hereafter believe in him."* Is this correct reasoning? Did Christ see that they were disposed to believe? Consider the character of these Corinthian Christians previous to their conversion. Their city was distinguished for opulence, elegance, idolatry, and licentiousness. Paul was afraid for his life in the midst of such moral darkness, and Christ assured him that he would preserve him. Hear the apostle's own description of these unbelievers, who were by him in Christ Jesus to be born of the gospel: Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extor-

* Whitby.

tioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such *were some of you:* but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6. 9–11.) Was it foreseen, then, that such sinners would of themselves be *disposed* to repent or believe? Or was just the contrary foreseen? Was Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, disposed to believe, when the great light and the voice arrested him? or did the gracious Saviour show him his ruin, and dispose him to believe and preach the faith he had laboured to destroy? You have his own answer. (2 Tim. 1. 9.) Now, it is a plain matter of fact that every unregenerate man is at enmity with God, and will live and die in his sins, if the Holy Spirit does not awaken him and bring him to Christ. Every sinner must be convicted of his guilt and ruin by the Spirit of grace; and by the same Spirit must be subdued to repentance, persuaded to believe, washed, justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath *begun* a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1. 6.) It is true that God begins the good work in *all* the saved. So it was with the Corinthian saints. To keep down the aspirings of pride, Paul says, Who maketh thee to *differ* from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if

thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? (1 Cor. 4. 7.) But if God begins the work of grace, he must have purposed to begin it; and therefore he chooses us to salvation of his own pleasure, and not on the ground of any foreseen goodness in us, or disposition to come to him; for there is nothing of the kind to be foreseen. We are *created* unto good works. Whom he did foreknow he also did *predestinate* to be *conformed* to the image of his Son. (Rom. 8. 30.) We are chosen TO holiness, *not on account of it.* According as he hath chosen us in him, *before the foundation of the world*, THAT WE SHOULD BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLAME BEFORE HIM IN LOVE; having *predestinated us unto the adoption of children*, by Jesus Christ, to himself, *according to the good pleasure of his will;* to the praise of the glory of his *grace*, wherein he hath *made* us accepted in the Beloved.—Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. (Ephes. 1. 4–11.) Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, NOT ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS OWN PURPOSE AND GRACE, WHICH WAS GIVEN US (which he determined to give us) IN CHRIST JESUS BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN. (2 Tim. 1. 9.) The children being not yet born, *neither having done any good or evil*, that the purpose of God according to *election* might

stand, *not of works but of him that calleth*, it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. (Rom. 9. 11–13.) When Paul toiled with prayers and tears for the salvation of his blinded Jewish brethren, his only hope was derived from the purposed grace of God: I say, then, hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. The grace which saved *me*, the chief of sinners, can rescue *them*. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: (i. e. believing Gentiles:) but, as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance; that is, He hath purposed to bestow on sinners the gifts of his Spirit, and to call them into marvellous light, and he is unchangeable. (Rom. chap. 11.) Ye have not *chosen me*, but I have *chosen you*, and ordained you, that you should go and *bring forth fruit*, and that your *fruit should remain*.* (John 15. 16.) Such is the unvarying testimony of the Scriptures. It must be admitted, therefore, that God does make men to differ from each other by the special influences of his Spirit. This is indeed an obvious matter of *fact*, which we could

* The reader may consult the following additional passages: Psa. 2. 7, 8: Psa. 89: Isa. 53. 10–12: Matt. 20. 23: John 6. 37: Acts 13. 48: Tit. 1. 1, 2: Rev. 13. 8.

not deny, even if it were not directly affirmed by the inspired writers. If, then, it is true that God calls some out of darkness into his marvellous light, and leaves others to despise his entreaties, and grieve the strivings of his Spirit, and eat of the fruit of their own way, he *purposed* so to do. You will not say that God had no previous intentions respecting this important matter. If you never act yourself rationally without a previous purpose, you cannot suppose that *He* does. What difference, then, can it make whether God purposed from *everlasting* to save us, or "elected us in *time?*" Some maintain that "chosen from the beginning" (2 Thess. 2. 13.) means when we *begin to believe*. This absurdity is manifest from Scripture and facts; besides, Paul uses this word as synonymous with the expression "before the world began." But suppose it were true that we are chosen when we begin to believe; this would avail nothing, if we never commence the work of salvation till we are constrained by the grace of God. There is, however, a more summary method of avoiding the embarrassment arising from an eternal purpose. Does the Judge of all the earth *do* right? If so, it cannot be objected that there is any thing wrong in his *purposing* to do right, even if the purpose eternally precedes the righteous act. A child may determine, when he becomes a man, to do some noble deed. The time arrives, and he

executes his purpose. Would you approve of his *deed*, but tell him that it was wrong to *resolve* so long beforehand to do what is praiseworthy? Now, it is very plain that if all the *acts* of God are just and holy, the purposes *preceding* and *producing* these acts must be equally just and holy. And predestination, foreordination, election, decree, purpose, mean simply that God always intended to do whatever he does.

But there is another very important consideration. A purpose or decree, *unexecuted*, inflicts no injury, exerts no influence whatever except upon him who forms it. It is a mere *mental exercise*. The *execution* of a purpose, therefore, effects all the harm if there is any. We may then turn our attention wholly to the *accomplishment* of the divine purposes, for this constitutes the entire ground of objection. The simple inquiry now is, What are *matters of fact* in the divine administration? What *doeth* God in the salvation of sinners? Does He make them to "differ from each other," bringing some to repentance and not others? Will not the genuine converts in every revival confess this, with wonder and tears of joy? As they see the many unblest by the "refreshing from the presence of the Lord," turning away in the day of visitation, *must* they not say,

'T was the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced me in;

Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin?

Must they not accord with Paul in the song of praise: We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. (2 Thess. 2. 13.) Predestination or election, call it what we choose, must be admitted in this matter-of-fact form, unless we are prepared to terminate our departure from revealed truth in the darkness of atheism.

It will be expected, now, that this much abused doctrine—the sole hope of salvation—should be reconciled with *human agency* and *accountability.*

It is obvious, from the view which has been taken of the subject, that we are not chosen to salvation without respect to duty, and the use of appropriate means, and the necessity of our own efforts, although God purposed to save the redeemed according to his own will, and not on the ground of any foreseen obedience in them. Our own experience amply demonstrates that it is necessary for us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, though God worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. (Phil. 2. 12.) It is evident that in conviction, and regeneration, and sanctification, and the last stage

of preparation for the heavenly rest, God employs those means which are consistent with his own perfections and the nature of the human mind, and which leave us in the entire possession of moral agency. There is no interference, therefore, with duty and accountability. Indeed, how *can* the sinner be saved, unless *freely?* Is he not made *willing* in the day of divine power? When God *draws*, does he not *run* after him? There are no *slaves* in the kingdom of grace. The truth has made every man a *free* and voluntary subject. There is no difficulty, then, in reconciling divine agency with our duty, and responsibility, and efforts to obtain salvation.* This will

* Much prejudice has been excited against predestination from a misapprehension of what is called *reprobation*. Many consider this as the counterpart of election, and affirm that if God has decreed the salvation of the elect, he must necessarily have decreed also the perdition of the non-elect. But this is not a correct inference from the doctrine of predestination. If all are so opposed to holiness that they will never accept of salvation till awakened by the Spirit and brought to repentance, no *decree* is necessary to shut out sinners from the kingdom of heaven. Left to themselves and their idols, like Ephraim, it is clear that they will *voluntarily* live and die in their sins. A decree, therefore, on this subject would be wholly superfluous. According to the Scriptures, election brings into the kingdom of grace all who are saved; the rest God leaves to their own chosen way, and has ordained their punishment according to their *works*. He does not hinder them from complying with the offers of mercy. He entreats and commands them to be saved. His Spirit strives with them. His Son died for them, and says, "How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye *would* not." God expressly declares that he

be fully evident if we consider the practical view which the inspired teachers have given of divine sovereignty. Paul was assured by the angel that he, and all who were with him in the ship, should escape safe to land. But he did not discourage the efforts of the seamen for their own preservation. (Acts 27. 30.) And after he had "exhorted them to be of good cheer," relying on the truth of the divine promise, he said; Except these *abide in the ship*, ye *cannot* be *saved*. He viewed in the same light the purpose of God, respecting his *spiritual* salvation. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a *cast-away*." (1 Cor. 9. 27.) When he describes the sovereignty of God in the election of some of the Jews, and the blinding of others, (Rom. ch. 2.) he says of his labours among the Gentiles: I magnify mine office; if by any means I may *provoke to emulation* them which are my flesh, and might *save* some of them. It is worthy of special notice, that the prophets and apostles warn sinners of their danger, when they

"has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," and would rather that he should turn and live. But, after having warned and entreated the sinner, and hedged up his way to death by judgments and mercies, if he *will* force his passage down to the pit, God leaves him; saying, "What more could I do for my vineyard?" This is *Scripture* reprobation, except that the word means something vile, rejected, as "reprobate silver." (See Prov. 1. 24-31: Jer. 6. 30.)

know that their destruction is foretold, and exhort them to turn from evil, that they may escape predicted judgments. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans was determined and foretold, but the prophets entreated the wicked inhabitants to cease from evil, that the city and nation might be spared. Zedekiah, especially, was exhorted to obey the word of the Lord, that the enemy might not prevail. (Jer. 38. 20.) God had purposed that Pharaoh should harden his heart, and forbid the departure of the Israelites, and follow them into the Red Sea, and perish: but Moses, by divine command, counselled him to perform his duty in releasing the captives. (Ex. ch. 6. and 7.*) When Shimei cursed David, he forbid Abishai to destroy him, saying, The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who then shall say, Wherefore hast thou done so? (2 Sam. 16. 10.) Yet Shimei was guilty and voluntary enough in his wickedness. So David thought. (1 Kings 2. 9.) Joseph's brethren were very cruel in selling him to the Egyptians, yet the merciful purpose of God was concerned in the fulfilling of that event. (Gen. 45. 5.) In the same light we must regard the determination of God with respect to Jacob and Esau. (Rom. 9. 11–13.) He had purposed before their existence to reverse the rights of primogeniture, but you will perceive that Esau was voluntary in selling

* See also 1 Kings 22. 15–22: Deut. 2. 26–30.

his birthright. (Gen. 25. 32–34.) Paul calls him "*profane* Esau, who, for *one morsel of meat*, sold his birthright." (Heb. 12. 16.) Esau felt that he had been foolish and wicked in *despising* the favour of God. There is apparently a further difficulty in the expression, Jacob have I *loved*, and Esau have I *hated*. (Mal. 1. 2, 3.) If the first born of these brethren was profane, and the younger was upright, this would be sufficient ground for loving one and hating the other. But hatred frequently signifies a less degree of love; and love often signifies a preference. Christ says in one of the evangelists (Luke 14. 26.) that if we do not *hate* father and mother, we cannot be his disciples. In another (Matt. 10. 37.) he says, He that loveth father or mother *more* than me is not worthy of me. See also Deut. 21. 15: Prov. 13. 24: Matt. 5. 43.

If we take the practical view, then, of divine sovereignty which the Scriptures furnish, we shall be relieved from perplexity on this mysterious subject. A clear knowledge of *duty* will be united with a proper feeling of dependence, and the whole praise of our salvation will be ascribed to riches of grace in Christ Jesus. The young disciple will meet with many cavils and perplexing inquiries from the unbelieving; but I trust the doctrine of *biblical* predestination has been so fully explained and reconciled with duty and accountability, that his faith will not be

shaken. While others despise, and wonder, and perish, let not the *Christian* forget that

> *Prediction* still, in all things, and all men,
> Supposes *means:* without means used, what it
> Predicts *revokes.*

He that OVERCOMETH, *the same shall be clothed in* WHITE RAIMENT; *and I will not blot out his name out of the* BOOK OF LIFE, *but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.* BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE. (Rev. 2. 10: 3. 5.)

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS.

THE ACTS of God, as we remarked in the last chapter, are the result of his previous and corresponding PURPOSES. Whatever he *does*, he *designed* to do. Is it not equally true that he *accomplishes* whatever he has *designed*. This is the present object of inquiry. The truth has been demonstrated that God *purposed* to save sinners before the world began. Will he *execute* this purpose? The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand. (Isa. 14. 24, 27.) God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Num. 23. 19.) For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. (Heb. 6.

16. 18.) He, then, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," will fulfil his determination to save his chosen inheritance. But *salvation*, when completed, will be the perfect and everlasting holiness of heaven. The execution of this purpose, therefore, requires not merely conviction, and regeneration, and sanctification, but it must secure the saints against forfeiting, by disobedience, the promised redemption. The simple question, then, is—Will God perform the good work which he has begun, and keep the saints by his power, through faith, unto salvation? This is not denied by those who admit the doctrine of personal election, as it has been explained; for it is absurd to maintain that those who are absolutely predestinated unto life will be suffered to wander away from the fold and perish. If the *purpose* respecting their salvation is absolute and unchangeable, equally sure must be the *fulfilment* of the purpose. The perseverance of the saints, therefore, is the result of their election, and the two doctrines must stand or fall together. The truth of the one has been already demonstrated; and, since the truth of the other follows as a necessary consequence, we have only to *illustrate* the doctrine of perseverance—exhibit its *practical tendency*—and guard it against *perversion*.

The word PERSEVERANCE signifies steadiness in pursuit, constancy in progress. As used with

reference to the present subject, it means that *real* saints, notwithstanding their imperfections and backslidings, will preserve to the end of life some degree of holiness. Or, in other words, they will not relapse into their former unregenerate state. In order to maintain this position, it will be necessary to account for the instances of apostacy mentioned in the Scriptures, and the warnings against defection addressed to Christians. I shall consider,

I. *The instances of supposed apostacy.*

The truth was predicted that many deceivers and deceived should unite with the visible church, and afterwards fall away from their vain profession. When Christ spake of the mysteries of redemption, and the necessity of divine agency in bringing sinners into his kingdom, from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. (John 6. 66.) Paul says to Timothy: This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia, be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. He says also that Hymeneus, Alexander, and Philetus, "made shipwreck *concerning* the faith." Of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus: who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some. (1 Tim. 1. 19, 20: 2 Tim. 1. 15: 2. 18.) Those who are called "stony ground hearers," may be reckoned in the same class, and we may

add the enemies of the truth mentioned 2 Tim. chap. 3. Now it is evident that unregenerate men may be much enlightened, and bear in their external conduct a very near resemblance to Christians. The Saviour forewarned his disciples of this: False Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were *possible*, even the elect. (Mark 13. 22.) Beloved, remember ye, says the apostle Jude, (v. 17–19.) the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts? These be they who *separate* themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. Paul says of such: They are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (2 Cor. 13. 13–15. May we not account, then, for the cases of apostacy recorded in the Scriptures, without supposing that any child of God was deceived, and left to perish? No matter if some of those who fell away from their profession of faith, prophesied, and did many wonderful works. Balaam, and Saul, and Caiaphas, might have accomplished all these things in an *unregenerate state*. Many in that day will

say unto me, Lord, Lord, have we not *prophesied* in thy name? and in thy name have *cast out devils?* and in thy name done many *wonderful works?* And then will I profess unto them, I *never knew* you—never *acknowledged* you as my disciples. (Matt. 7. 22, 23.) Many who *professed* to be disciples of Christ, were offended when he called himself the bread from heaven. They said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? and they walked no more with him. But it is written concerning them: Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that *believed* not, and who should *betray* him. (John 6. 60–66.) If this testimony is insufficient to establish the truth that the apostates which have been mentioned were never true believers, the apostle John is a decisive witness: They went out *from us*, but they were *not of us;* for if they had been *of us*, they *would have continued* with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not *all* of us. *But ye have an* UNCTION *from the* HOLY ONE. (1 John 2. 19, 20.) The only correct interpretation of this passage is the following —and if there were no other proof in the Bible, it would establish the perseverance of the saints: They *professed* to be Christians, but they were *not*, for if they *had been* Christians, they would have *remained* such. There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. (1 Cor. 11. 29.)

But it is maintained still, by some, that there are a *few* instances of defection from saving faith, and that these *facts* disprove the doctrine under consideration. The case of Judas is cited. If it can be proved that he was ever a true disciple, the opponents of the saints' perseverance have gained their cause. But where is such proof to be found? Christ said, long before he was delivered into the hands of his enemies—for he knew from the *beginning* who believed not and who should betray him—Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve. (John 6. 70, 71.) The apostles, moreover, when about to choose a successor to the traitor, refer to the prediction of David (Psa. 69.) in such a manner as leads us to conclude that he was never more than a nominal disciple. (Acts ch. 1.) And the Saviour says: Of them which thou gavest me have I lost *none*. (John 18. 9.) According to this passage, Judas was never given to Christ by the Father, i. e. was never a true disciple. In the preceding chapter, there is an apparent deviation from this truth: Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. (John 17. 12.) The meaning of this passage I suppose to be simply this: 'None that *thou gavest me* are *lost*, but the son of perdition *is*

lost.' The language does not imply that Judas was ever included in the covenant of redemption. There is a similar expression in Luke 4. 26, 27. Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. This was a Gentile city, and a Gentile widow. The same language occurs in the next verse: Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus (Elisha) the prophet: and none of *them* was cleansed, saving Naaman the *Syrian*. This phraseology, occurring not unfrequently in the Scriptures, explains the meaning of the similar expression: "none of them is lost but the son of perdition." No evidence, therefore, can be derived from this source, in favour of the assertion that Judas fell from a state of holiness. Nor can this be demonstrated from the language of Christ respecting the future glory of the apostles. Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matt. 19. 28.) Whatever may be the meaning of this passage, it contains an intimation that the future betrayer of the Son of man had not followed him as a true disciple; for it is immediately added: Many that

are first shall be last, and the last shall be first. (ver. 30.) We find nothing conclusive, at least, that Judas apostatized from vital godliness, and "went to his own place." If it be asked why Christ says *twelve* thrones, it is sufficient to reply that he could not speak of *eleven* without prematurely exposing the character of this deceived apostle, which he was cautious not to do till the hour had come. This might be the reason that he addressed the disciples without distinction on the subject of future rewards; having likewise in view Matthias as the occupant of the vacant throne. On the whole, it is manifest that Iscariot was one of the "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." (2 Cor. 11. 13.)

But it is asserted to be a *fact* that *David* and *Peter* fell *entirely from grace.* There is no doubt, however, that they are both celebrating the praises of God and the Lamb. Were they then restored after their fall? It should be remembered that the Scriptures no where promise a *second regeneration.* Not only this, but they positively assert that if Christians apostatize from the faith, and relapse into their former unregenerate state, they cannot be renewed to repentance. (Heb. 6. 4–6: 10. 26, 27: 2 Pet. 2. 20: Ezek. 18. 24.) It follows, therefore, that although the Psalmist and the apostle grievously sinned, yet they did not at any time *utterly* fail

of the grace of God. The 51st Psalm is the language of the deeply penitent *saint*, not that of the *convicted sinner*. David prays, not for salvation, but the blessedness of communion with the Most High: Restore unto me the *joy* of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. (ver. 12.) Peter was secured against the loss of heaven by the unfailing prayer of Christ: Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, (reclaimed from the error of thy way) strengthen thy brethren. (Luke 23. 31, 32.) When the *saint* falls into the great transgression, he weeps bitterly, and returns to God. The hypocrite justifies himself, and becomes bolder in iniquity the more he lays aside the mask of profession.

It is still further objected that the apostates mentioned in the Scriptures are called *saints*, and were received as such by the apostles. Simon, it is written, believed, and was baptized. (Acts 8. 13.) There is no doubt that many were received into the visible church who were destitute of piety. The reason is that the apostles, except occasionally by special revelation, did not know the *hearts* of men, but judged, as others do, from the *outward appearance*. Those who gave apparent evidence of godliness they admitted to their fellowship, and spoke of them, and

treated them, according to their supposed character. What less could they do? If any inquire why the All-seeing Spirit did not prevent this, I answer, because God purposed to suffer deceivers to occupy, for a time, a place in the visible church. We should not expect, therefore, that he would distinguish "the tares from the wheat" before the appointed time, but permit deceitful workers to bear the name and wear the livery of the Christian till they should either expose their real character, or he should be pleased to cut off the unfruitful branches.

I shall now endeavour to prove,

II. That the *real* Christian will *endure to the end*, and be *saved*.

The meaning of perseverance has been already explained, but it is important to keep in view the correct definition of the word. We have seen that the saints may fall into great sins, as in the case of David and Peter, without separating themselves *utterly* from the loving kindness of the Lord. (Psa. 89. 28–34: Prov. 24. 16.) We have seen also that deceivers, bearing a near resemblance to Christians, may profess Christ, and fall away and perish. And it has been shown that if the godly depart from their righteousness, and return to their former state, they cannot be renewed again, but must die the death of the wicked, and receive their portion with unbelievers. The question then is, will God, by

his power, keep the saints through faith unto salvation? The doctrine under consideration rests wholly on this foundation, for there is nothing in the nature of holiness which can secure obedience; and Christians, left to themselves, are more liable to fall beyond recovery than the holy angels were, or our holy first parents. This is therefore our simple inquiry—Will God *finish* the work of grace which he *begins?*

1. *This is a rational supposition.*

If the saints are left to secure their final redemption by their own faithfulness, they are not merely *liable* to perish, but they *infallibly will* come short of the glory of God. But a kingdom has been prepared for them, from the foundation of the world. Is it then uncertain whether this kingdom has been prepared in vain? If God, by his promises and grace, has not secured to believers the holiness necessary to admission into heaven—if he does not *work in them* both to *will* and to *do* of his good pleasure, but has intrusted them alone with the *working out* of their *own* salvation, it is manifest that his kingdom of grace, prepared at so much cost, will never be occupied by the disciples of his Son! This is too revolting for belief. It must be *certain*, on some ground or other, that an innumerable multitude out of every nation, and kindred, and people, shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. But what *makes* it certain? Does God

foresee that this host of disciples, struggling on earth against the devices of Satan—the allurements of sin—and remaining corruptions, will, of their own strength and accord, gain the victory and wear the white robes of the conqueror?* It is not *true* that a single Christian soldier will

*I have already expressed my belief, that God *can* foresee and foreknow the voluntary actions of men, without *determining* that they shall act in any particular manner. The case of David, at Keilah, (1 Sam. 23. 11.) was cited in the last chapter as evidence of this. God foreknew what the inhabitants would do—he informed David, and he escaped. Now if the divine Being could not foreknow what the men of Keilah would do, without first *decreeing* what they should do, I see not but it was necessary for them to deliver up the fugitive. Otherwise the *purpose* necessary to the *knowledge* was frustrated—or it must have been a *conditional* purpose! and how much knowledge can be derived from this source? It is admitted that God cannot *foreknow* many things, without *determining* them, because the existence of the things depends upon his purpose. And it is evident that he cannot foreknow *all* the conduct of men, without the previous purpose to control their actions according to his will and pleasure. The instance of the king of Assyria, (Isa. 10. 5–7.) and of Joseph's brethren, may be referred to. Whatever future events require the special agency of God, are determined by him, and his knowledge of them results from his purposes. But it cannot be necessary in *every* instance, to purpose what free agents *shall* do, in order to know what they *will* do. Neither is there any real distinction between *foreseeing* and *foreknowing* all things. *Sight*, with a *spirit*, is *perception*, and perception is knowledge. I am willing to grant, therefore, that God might certainly foreknow that Christians, without his spiritual agency, would persevere in holiness to the end, *if this were true.* But since it is positive that they *will fall and perish*, if he does not preserve them, he *knows* that they will endure and be saved, because he has *purposed* this. In no other way *could* he know it.

overcome his spiritual enemies and gain the crown of life, unless aided in so doing. (Rom. 8. 37.) The salvation of *any*, and of *every* believer, therefore, is secured by the immutable promises and infallible grace of God. There is this remarkable difference between the condition of the saint, and the condition of the angels at their creation, and our first parents in their innocence. No unchangeable promise secured *them* from falling: but God has sworn by his holiness that he will not utterly take his loving kindness from the subjects of his *grace*, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. (Psa. 89. 33.)

2. *The perseverance of the saints is established by what is called the covenant of redemption.*

We know little more of this great mystery than the fact that the Father and the Son are represented as entering into an agreement concerning the work of our salvation. God says: Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. (Psa. 2. 8.) He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities. (Isa. 53. 11.) Christ says: All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they

follow me, and I give unto them *eternal* life; and they *shall never perish*, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all: and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. This is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I *should lose nothing*, but should raise it up at the last day. Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give *eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* (John 6. 37–39: 10. 27–29: 17. 2.)

3. *The doctrine we are illustrating is confirmed by the explicit declaration of the Scriptures.*

The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. They go from strength to strength, every one of them appeareth in Zion before God. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take away from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone

out of my lips. The Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints: they are *preserved for ever*. (Psa. 37. 23–28: 84. 7–17: 89. 30–36: 94. 14.) The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. (Prov. 4. 18.) The righteous also shall hold on his way: and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. (Job 17. 9.) The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and keep you from evil. And we have confidence *in the Lord* touching you, that ye both *do*, and *will do* the things which we command you. (2 Thess. 3. 3, 4.) Who shall also *confirm* you unto the *end*, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1. 8.) Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath *begun* a good work in you, will *perform* it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1. 6.) Who are kept by *the power of God*, through *faith*, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet. 1. 3–5.) Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not *an hair of your head perish*. (Luke 21. 17, 18.) And they shall be *my people*, and I will be *their God*, and I will give them *one heart*, and *one way*, that they may *fear me for ever*. And I will make an *everlasting covenant with them*, and will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their heart, that they *shall not depart from me*. (Jer. 32. 38–40 with ch. 31. 31–34.)

For if, when we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by *the death of his Son;* much more being reconciled, we shall be *saved by his life.* (Rom. 5. 8–10.)*

It would seem that such an array of passages must be sufficient to place the doctrine of *perseverance* on an immoveable basis.

But it is objected that many other passages imply the *possibility*, and the *danger* of falling from a state of saving knowledge, and perishing for ever. Such are the warnings, threatenings, exhortations addressed to Christians, and the positive declarations that *if they do apostatize*, they *cannot be restored.* Before we attempt to reconcile these passages with the doctrine which has been considered, it is important to notice a few references which are supposed to establish the *fact* that some real disciples *have* apostatized. This was disproved indeed, at the commencement of the subject, while examining the character of those who fall away from their profession. But the young Christian may be perplexed by particular passages, often quoted, which I have not yet explained. It has been affirmed, from John 15. 2, that true branches are taken away from the vine. "Every branch in me that beareth *not fruit*, he *taketh away.*" But it is evident that every branch truly united with

* See also Rom. 8. 34–39: Isa. 49. 14–16: Heb. 13. 5, 6: Isa. 54. 10: 2 Tim. 4. 18: Rom. 14. 4: 1 John 2. 1: Heb. 7. 25.

the vine, that is, every *Christian*, must bear *some* fruit. "If any man be *in* Christ, he is a *new creature*." There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them which are *in* Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8. 1.) The last part of this verse, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit," shows *who* are *in Christ*. The fruitless branch, therefore, is a *nominal*, not a *real* disciple. The same is true of the branches broken off from the *olive tree*, i. e. the Jewish Church. (Rom. 11. 17.) A candid reading of this chapter will convince any one that unbelieving Israelites, cut off from their *visible* relation to the kingdom of God, are intended by the severed branches. Another passage is always quoted. *Ye are fallen from grace.* (Gal. 5. 4.) But what is the *matter of fact* respecting these Galatians? Were they *Christians*, when Paul sent them his epistle? They were in *his* judgment. I have *confidence in you* through the Lord, that ye will be *none otherwise minded.* (5. 14.) He means then, simply that if they listened to corrupt Jewish teachers, and sought justification by the *law*, they must renounce the hope of justification by grace. (See chap. 2. 18: 3. 1–4: 5. 8–13.) There is another passage (Heb. 10. 29.) which is thought to furnish conclusive evidence that *some Christians* have *ruined themselves.* If the word *sanctified* applies to Christ, as there is reason to suppose, (see John 10. 36: Heb. 13. 20.) the

apostle's language, even if it implies that true disciples *may* depart from the faith and openly despise the Son of God, does not prove that they *have* incurred this dreadful guilt. The parable of the ten virgins has also been confidently relied upon as decisive of the fact that believers fall from grace and are rejected at the last day. (Matt. 25. 1–12.) It is obvious that they who thus apply the language of Christ, misapprehend its true meaning. A parable is a similitude; a relation under which something else is represented. It is always introduced for the purpose of exhibiting or illustrating some truth. This being the design of parables, we must in the first place seek for the truth intended to be exhibited by them, and then consider their application. The thing shadowed out by the similitude is the important point; the *similitude itself* is of secondary consequence, and should always be limited by the general subject, for the illustration of which it is employed. What is the design of the parable under consideration? Christ had informed the disciples of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and of the final judgment. He had told them that the Son of Man should come *suddenly* and *unexpectedly*. In the twenty-fourth chapter he had exhibited the importance of watchfulness, by referring to the days of Noah—to the wicked tenants of the world disbelieving the preacher of righteousness, and unconscious of danger till

it was too late to escape the impending deluge. He alludes to other examples, with the consequences of being unprepared, and adds: WATCH THEREFORE: *for ye know not what* HOUR YOUR LORD COMETH. (Matt. 24. 36–51.) The subject is continued, and reference is made to a wedding —the incidents of which might have been literally true; for such were the ceremonies at Jewish nuptials. Ten virgins went out to meet the bridegroom—five were wise, and took oil in their vessels—five were foolish, and took no oil, except in their lamps. At a late and unexpected hour the bridegroom was announced, and before the foolish attendants could go and fill their extinguished lamps, the nuptial train had entered in and they were excluded from the marriage. So *ye*, unless ye *watch* and *pray*, will be surprised by the sudden coming of the heavenly Bridegroom, and *shut out from the marriage supper of the Lamb*. The parable, as I apprehend, has no further use, and it is mere assumption that these virgins denote *true and false professors*. The Bible reveals no such thing; and till it does, we may safely conclude that the *ten virgins* denote *ten virgins*—and *lamp* signifies *lamp* —and *oil* represents *oil*. Besides, if oil in a lamp signifies grace in the heart, what can the supply of grace in the vessels mean, unless works of *supererogation?* The parable, then, teaches us the simple truth, that faithfulness was neces-

sary to secure the salvation of apostles, and is necessary to the future welfare of every Christian.

But if no real disciple is ever lost, is it true that the Scriptures address the saints as *liable* to apostacy and consequent perdition? This cannot well be denied. The warnings and threatenings cannot otherwise be interpreted. And there are several passages which directly imply that Christians are exposed to irreclaimable defection. (Ezek. 33. 12, 13: 18. 24: 2 Pet. 2. 20–22: Matt. 5. 29, 30: Rev. 3. 5: Heb. 6. 4–6: 10. 26–32.) The first of these references undeniably implies the truth which I have admitted. "The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression." Shall we say with some that the *self-righteous* are here described? But is this the prophet's meaning? If the self-righteous man, i. e. the sinner, *turns away* from his self-righteousness (wickedness) and doeth the abominations of *the wicked* he shall *die*—but if he *holds fast* his self-righteousness (wickedness) he shall *live!* This absurdity of interpretation, if we deny implicit truth, must be repeated also in the epistle to the Hebrews. (6. 4–6.) Paul says, if those whom he addresses crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame, it is impossible (ἀνακαινίζειν εις μετάνοιαν) to *renew them again* unto *repentance*. The nature of the

crime of which he speaks, and the terrible threatening denounced, supposes greater guilt than is incurred by unregenerate men. And facts, in many revivals, assure us that the most openly wicked of unbelievers, even if they have been much enlightened, are not without the pale of mercy. But these apostates, mentioned by the apostle, cannot be restored. If they had never been renewed to repentance, why does he assert the impossibility of their being *again* renewed. To *renew*, is to restore to the *former state*, in this instance. And Paul exhorts the Hebrews to guard against apostacy, because they cannot be restored if they fall. This implies that they were Christians; and if this is denied, we must admit that the apostle warns vain professors of religion against falling away from self-righteousness, assuring them that if they do apostatize from their unregenerate state, they cannot be brought back again. What would it avail if they could? It is absurd to suppose that mere professors are addressed in such language; and besides, the apostle believes them to be Christian brethren. (ver. 9.) Admitting, then, as we must, that Christians are in this epistle and elsewhere in the Scriptures addressed as liable to fall and perish, *why* are they thus addressed? "Because God treats Christians as free agents, as rational beings; because he guards them against defection, not by mere *physical* power, but by *moral*

means adapted to their nature, as free and rational agents. Let every man speculate as he pleases on this subject, when he addresses Christians by way of warning, he will inevitably fall into the same modes of address. And plainly he ought so to do; for thus have all the sacred writers done, and thus did the Saviour himself."*

The truth is established, then, that the saints are preserved by the *power of God;* but *in themselves considered,* they are liable to wander from the fold and perish. On this ground—including also their accountability and the duty of perseverance—they are warned and exhorted to faithfulness: and these admonitions are a part of the appropriate means employed to keep them in the faith. So far as injunctions to duty, and effort, and assurance of hope, and the gratitude of obedience are concerned, the inspired writers do not bring into view the personal election of the saints and the promises pledged for their endurance to the end. They take the same practical view of spiritual things that they do of temporal. (Acts 27. 31: 2 Thess. 2. 13–17: 2 Pet. 1. 1–12: Rev. 3. 2–6.)

Will any child of God pervert to licentiousness and sin a revealed doctrine—the truth of which is both demonstrated and created by the natural depravity of the human heart? Will he abuse a doctrine on which is hung the *sole hope* of his

* Stuart on the Hebrews, vol. ii. Excursus 12.

own salvation? If gratitude for redeeming love and the washing of regeneration do not prevent him, a correct understanding of the subject will. True, the sheep shall *never perish.* But who are the *sheep*? They, and they alone, who persevere in holiness. If therefore you have no evidence of living faith, the promise does not reach *you.* He only who *endureth to the end* shall not perish. And if *you* endure to the end, you will find no time for *idleness* or *sin.* Will you still dismiss the subject with this *lazy* remark; 'If God has *purposed* that I *shall be* faithful, he will *fulfil* his purpose without *my concern.*' What is this but saying—'if *I am to be* faithful, I *shall be* faithful, whether I am *faithful or not,* and I will *not be faithful?*' "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of *you,* and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For if these things (the Christian virtues) be in you and abound, they make you neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, *give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for* IF *ye do these things ye* SHALL NEVER FALL: *for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you* ABUNDANTLY *into the* EVERLASTING KINGDOM *of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* WHEREFORE I WILL NOT

BE NEGLIGENT TO PUT YOU ALWAYS IN REMEMBRANCE OF THESE THINGS, THOUGH YE KNOW THEM AND BE ESTABLISHED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH."

CHAPTER X.

ON THE NATURE OF INABILITY.

THIS subject has been partially illustrated in the preceding chapters. But it has so important a bearing on all the prominent doctrines of the gospel and the practical duties of religion, that I shall give it a distinct consideration.

It is worthy of notice that *promises* and *threatenings* are intermingled through the whole Bible. Excepting the introductory, but very brief history of creation and the fall of man, it commences with intimations of grace for the penitent, (Gen. 3. 15.) and closes with the general invitation to take the water of life freely. The *last* denunciation, expressed in few and appalling words, is enclosed by the offers of free salvation and a benediction—and thus has God finished his testimony with the most explicit declaration that sinners, without distinction, may come to him and trust in his mercy. I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the *Spirit* and the *bride* say, *Come*. And let him that *heareth*, say Come. And let him that is *athirst*, Come. And *whosoever will*, let him TAKE THE WATER

OF LIFE FREELY. (Rev. 22. 16, 17.) There is every appearance of sincerity in these invitations, coming from the Redeemer, and the Spirit of grace, and the whole church of the first born. We cannot doubt it, unless we deny the perfections of Christ, the perfections of the Spirit, and the benevolence of the Church. And how can this be denied, even in *thought?* The Son of God has demonstrated, by his humiliation and death, the truth that *He* is sincere. The Spirit, by his *gracious striving*, has proved that *He* is sincere. The whole church, militant and triumphant, impelled by the love and command of Christ to seek the enlargement of his kingdom, have testified by their sacrifices, toils, and prayers, that *they* are sincere. When we regard, therefore, the warnings and threatenings, intermingled with invitations, promises, exhortations, and offers of free forgiveness, addressed to sinners, and assuring them in so many forms, and with perpetual repetition that "all things are ready," it is difficult to conceive that they are destitute of the *ability* requisite to avail themselves of the promised blessedness. But when urged by the messengers of Christ to go and drink freely from the fountain of living waters, they reply—'We do not feel *athirst.* We *cannot* realize our guilt and danger—*cannot* repent—and *believe*—and make to ourselves a *new heart*, and a *right spirit.*' If these excuses are justifiable—if the

sinner is *literally* and *truly* UNABLE to do what God requires, he can deserve no blame for living in sin. But this granted, in what light are the Scriptures and their Author to be viewed? On this point the Lord hath a controversy with the transgressor. He invites and commands him to come and take the water of life freely. He denounces everlasting destruction from his presence, as the *wages* of disobedience, and attributes the ruin to the sinner's own *disinclination* to comply with the terms of salvation. Ye *will* not come to me, that ye *might have life.* (John 5. 40.) Because I have *called,* and ye *refused;* I have *stretched out my hand,* and no man *regarded;* but ye have *set at nought* all my counsel, and *would* none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.—For that they *hated knowledge,* and did not *choose* the fear of the Lord: they *would* none of my counsel: they *despised* all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their *own way,* and be filled with their *own devices.* They *refused to hearken,* and *pulled* away the *shoulder,* and *stopped their ears,* that they *should not hear.* Yea, they *made their hearts* as an *adamant stone,* lest they should *hear the law,* and the *words* which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a *great wrath from the Lord of hosts.* Therefore it is come to pass that

as *he* cried, and *they* would not hear: so *they* cried and *I* would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts. (Prov. 1. 24—31: Zech. 7. 11—13.)

Notwithstanding all this, the sinner claims—and it is a lamentable fact that some eminent teachers support his claim—that he has *no ability* to come to Christ and be saved. How then is this great controversy to be settled? The obstacles in the way of salvation, whatever they are, must be comprehended in these *four things:* either God is *unable* or *unwilling* to save the sinner; or the sinner is *unable* or *unwilling* to be reconciled to God.

I. *Is God* UNABLE *to save the sinner?* On this subject we must speak of inability as it relates to the circumstances in which God is placed as a moral Governor. His Omnipotence is not concerned in this inquiry, because reconciliation with offenders is a *moral* transaction. God *would* have been incapable of restoring the rebellious to his favour, on any terms submitted to by them, had not an adequate atonement been made for their offences. Without *shedding of blood* is *no remission.* (Heb. 9. 22.) But through the sacrifice of his Son, he *can* be just, and the justifier of him that believeth. Christ has "*tasted death* for *every man.*" Being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation unto *all them that obey him.* (Heb. 5. 9: 7. 24. 25.) Is not God able to save, then, "to *the uttermost* all

who come unto him" by faith in his Son? Would he invite the ends of the earth to look unto him and be saved, if he had no power to bestow the promised mercy? Would he command all men every where to *repent*, and threaten to inflict everlasting punishment on all for *unbelief*, if repentance and faith could not secure salvation? He *must* be able to fulfil all his gracious promises —and with adorable justice will he execute all his threatenings if they are not averted by penitence and faith. Is he then,

II. UNWILLING *to save all who submit themselves to Him?*

The same arguments which demonstrate his *ability*, prove also his *willingness* to save. The gift of his Son, laying on him the iniquities of us all—the strivings of his Spirit from year to year —his long suffering, forbearance, goodness—his precious promises—melting entreaties—awful denunciations—the parental reluctance and grief in giving up the ruined child (Hosea 11. 8.)—his oath, As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. (Ezek. 33. 11.)—Is it possible, after this exhibition of loving kindness, that God can be *unwilling* to save the chief of sinners? Did Christ weep over Jerusalem because the guilty people *could* not come to him and be gathered, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings? (Luke 13. 34.) We find hitherto no satisfactory answer to the appeal from God: *Why*

will ye die?—no *necessity* of perishing in sin. It remains to inquire,

III. *If the sinner is* UNABLE *to be reconciled to God.*

You say that you *cannot* repent—*cannot* believe. How do you know this? Did you ever make a fair experiment? Have you ever *earnestly* and *constantly* endeavoured to become a Christian? Some feeble and faithless attempts you may have made, but did you ever, with full and steadfast purpose, engage in the work of your own salvation? Have you laboured as faithfully for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, as for the meat that perisheth? If you never did, why do you say you *cannot* do that which you never zealously attempted? The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. (Matt. 11. 12.) You should *strive to enter in* at the strait gate, before you pronounce it impossible. But instead of striving for admission, you have grieved the Spirit of grace—slighted his counsels—refused when he called. You have loved *darkness* rather than *light.* Do you not feel that you are a *free* and *accountable* being? Do you not often resolve secretly that you will become a Christian, after a few more years of sinful indulgence? What becomes of the plea of inability in this case? But you will resort to the Scriptures for proof that no man *can*, of himself, come to Christ. We

must be *drawn by the Father*. True, but what is the meaning of this language? The Jews, in their stubbornness and prejudice, had rejected all the arguments which Christ advanced in evidence of his divine mission. He then said to them: No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. (John 6. 44.) What immediately follows? It is written in the prophets, (Isa. 54. 13.) And they shall be all *taught* of God. Every man, therefore, that hath *heard*, and hath *learned* of the Father, cometh to me. (ver. 45.) This drawing, therefore, is the enlightening, and sanctifying, and persuasive influence of the Spirit. And whence the *necessity* of this influence? We have the commentary of Christ on the meaning of *cannot*. There are some of you that *believe* not. *Therefore* said I unto you, that no man *can* come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. (ver. 64, 65.) It has been shown that the agency of the Spirit in conviction and regeneration, is consistent with the moral nature of man; neither interfering with *duty*, nor for a moment superseding the *necessity of obedience*. The sinner taught of God *freely comes* to Christ. Luther, if I remember, somewhere shrewdly remarks that "God does not draw sinners, as the hangman pulls the thief up the ladder on to the gallows, but as a father gathers his children around him." If the language of Christ, therefore, has been correctly

interpreted, the inability of the sinner consists in unbelief and aversion to godliness. The word cannot, in common use, very often signifies *disinclination* merely, *inconvenience*, or *unwillingness*. Listen to the conversation of any individual for a half hour, and you will repeatedly hear him assert that he *cannot* do many things, when it is evident that he does not mean he has no *power*, but he is not so *disposed*, or the things spoken of are *difficult*, or it is not *convenient* to attend to them. The Scriptures use this phraseology in the same manner, The world *cannot* hate *you;* but *me* it hateth because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil. (John 7. 7.) And he *could* there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. (Mark 6. 5.) *Can* the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? (Matt. 9. 15.) How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things?* (Matt. 12. 34.) *Can* that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? The things that my soul *refused* to touch are as my sorrowful meat. (Job 6. 7.)† He is such a son of Belial, that a man *cannot* speak to him.

* In all these passages, including John 6. 44, 64, 65. different tenses of the same verb, (δυναμαι) with a negative particle are used, signifying literally, to be unable.

† The Hebrew (מאן) refused, is translated in the Septuagint (ου δυναται) *could not* taste. So in Gen. 34. 14. We *cannot* do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised—the Hebrew (יכל) signifies to be unable.

(1 Sam. 25. 17.) They hated him, and (לא יכלו) *could* not, (were *unable* to) speak peaceably to him. (Gen. 37. 4.) If such, then, is the common and scriptural use of words *literally* denoting inability, or impossibility, are they to be *so* interpreted in relation to the work of reconciliation with God? Most evidently not. We have the authority of Christ, and the apostles, and prophets for resolving all the obstacles which prevent the sinner's submission to the gospel, into obstinacy, unbelief, the love of evil, and aversion to spiritual duties. The Saviour expresses the whole, when he says, Ye *will* not come to me. I am aware that some understand the word will, in this passage, as merely expressing the certainty that sinners left to themselves must perish, or that the Jews addressed were beyond the hope of pardon. But such a construction of the language is too obviously absurd to be admitted: unwillingness is the meaning, and if Christ intended to affirm that no man *literally* CAN come, or has *power* to come to him, how could he weep over Jerusalem, and say how often *would* I have gathered thy children—*and ye would not?* (Luke 13. 34.) Again he says: Why do ye not understand my speech? because ye *cannot* hear my word.—And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. (John 8. 43, 45.) Are we to suppose that the Jews absolutely *could not* hear and obey the truth? From a patient investigation of the Scrip-

tures, I am confident that they ascribe no inability to the sinner, except *voluntary and inexcusable depravity*. Even the strong language of the prophet (Ezek. 37. 1–4.) may be reconciled with this view of the subject. Unregenerate men are indeed as truly destitute of *spiritual* life, as the dry bones in the valley were of *natural* life. They are as really dependent on the quickening influence of the Spirit for restoration from moral death, as dry bones are dependent on the power of God for flesh and sinews, and a living attitude. But the *moral* creation differs very essentially from the *natural*, and the *ground* of dependence in the two cases exhibited by the vision, is far from being the same. It was not the *duty* of the dry bones to become living men. Is it not the *duty of the sinner* to become *spiritually minded?*

There is a distinction between *natural* and *moral* inability, which, from its supposed importance, deserves to be considered. The one implies the want of *natural power*—the other the want of *inclination* or *disposition*. It is admitted that these two kinds of inability, if they both deserve the name, are spoken of in the Scriptures. The men *rowed hard* to bring it (the ship) to the land; but they *could not:* for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. (Jonah 1. 13.) The eyes of Israel were *dim for age*, so that he *could not* see. (Gen. 48. 10.) In these cases, the most ardent desire of seeing and

reaching the land was necessarily unavailing. This is strictly and truly natural inability, and it is also natural *impossibility*. The passages which speak of the sinner's unwillingness to believe, of his aversion to holiness, and which declare his depravity insurmountable except by the aid of divine grace, describe what is called moral inability. It admits of a question whether this technical phraseology is applicable to the subject. Suppose, in the instance already cited, nothing had been necessary to bring the ship to land but the use of oars, and the mariners had natural power to ply them. What would be moral inability in this case? The want of inclination or disposition to row, do you say? True, they could not use their oars without a disposition to use them. But this is only saying that so long as a man is in one state of mind he cannot be in the opposite state—that so long as a stream runs in one direction, it cannot run in another. The question is, had the mariners not been *disposed* to use their oars, would they have had *power* to use them—that is, to change their mind on the subject? And if Israel, instead of being blind for age, had voluntarily shut his eyes, would he have power to open them? In these cases, we should not think of saying that the men supposed, were *unable* to do, what they were merely *unwilling* to do. In order to determine a man's ability, we do not inquire what he is *willing* or

disposed to do. *Duty* always presupposes natural power, and to speak of *natural ability* to do a *moral*, i. e. a *virtuous* thing, seems not to be a very correct use of language. Now if the sinner needs, in order to reconciliation with God, "the implantation of a new principle," strictly speaking, or the creation of "a new taste," or a "physical renewal," this inability is *natural*, and it cannot be his duty to remove these insuperable obstacles.* But if God requires only submission to his righteous authority, and the willing obedience of all the powers and faculties he has given us, it is strictly our duty to obey his commands. If duty, then, supposes natural power, why should we say that the sinner is *morally* unable to obey the divine requirements? Do we mean

* Some writers maintain that the sinner lost in the fall the power to *obey*, and yet God has not lost the right to *command*. But if this alleged inability is the result of Adam's transgression, it is not strictly true that we deprived ourselves of the power in question. Suppose it were so, would this avail any thing to the argument? According to the old illustration, if a servant wickedly disables himself, his master may still require him to perform his usual labour. What! require him to *do* that which it is *impossible he should do?* There is neither sense, nor reason, nor Scripture, to justify such a command. The servant may be punished for rendering himself useless, but you cannot command him to work miracles. It appears to me equally evident that the sinner cannot justly be required to do any thing beyond his ability—any thing which he cannot accomplish by the sincere desire of obedience and corresponding efforts. On no other ground am I able to reconcile the commands and threatenings of God with his perfections.

simply that he is unwilling, or has no disposition to obey? But he is required to have this disposition, and the disposition in fact is obedience, or supposes it; for how can a man really desire to love God without loving him, and how can he feel disposed to live to the glory of God, and not manifest the strength of his inclination in corresponding obedience? Is it proper therefore to say that either natural or moral inability prevents men from doing their duty? Is it true that sinners have not ability to do that which they are under obligations to do? I object to the use of the word inability in relation to moral subjects. It corresponds neither with the "cannot" of the Scriptures, nor the "cannot" in common use. When we say with reference to the transactions of life, that a man cannot do a *possible* thing, we do not mean that he lacks ability of any kind, but that the thing spoken of is difficult, or does not suit his inclination or convenience. And it is a perversion of our language to put any other construction upon it.

We are brought now to the last inquiry proposed for examination:

IV. *Is the sinner* UNWILLING *to be reconciled to God?*

The answer to this question is very obvious. If God is able and willing to save him, and if it is his duty to embrace the offers of pardon; all the obstacles in the way of his salvation are com-

prehended in his own voluntary depravity inexcusable aversion to holiness. I cannot d that a candid exposition of the Scriptures, an honest investigation of facts must conduct every man ultimately to the same conclusion. The testimony of such a man as Fuller, given in the maturity of his judgment, and as the result of much experience and patient study, is entitled to special consideration. He once supposed, as he acknowledges, that the inability of unconverted men to believe the gospel "must be natural, or something which did not arise from an evil disposition: but the more he examined the Scriptures the more he was convinced that all the inability ascribed to man with respect to believing arises from the aversion of his heart. They *will not* come to me, that they might have life—*will not* hearken to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely—*will not* seek after God, and *desire not* the knowledge of his ways."* Does not the still small voice of conscience testify that this is a scriptural view of the subject? Does not reason teach us that obligation and ability terminate at the same point? Dare you say, then, that you have no power to comply with the terms of salvation? Prophets affirm that you have "refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped your ears, that you should not hear, and made your hearts as an

* Works, vol. i. p. 11.

adamant stone." Apostles have told you that you are "despisers, and wonder, and perish" through unbelief. Christ has looked on you in tears, and said, How often "would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye *would not*." The Holy Ghost saith, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Judgments, and mercies, and warnings, and entreaties, and the incipient miseries of transgression, have met you in every avenue to perdition, saying, "Turn ye, for why will ye die?" What answer can you make to these various appeals, if you die at last in your sins?

But you will ask—Am I not dependent on the grace which bringeth salvation? Yes—but what is the nature of this dependence? "We are not wrought upon in religion as masons work on stone, or as carpenters on wood: we are rational and moral subjects. God works by setting us to work. *He* does not repent, but enables *us* to repent—does not *believe*, but enables *us* to believe. While He is the teacher, we are the learners. We are not carried forward like a man asleep in a ship: he leads and aids us. In doing good, we are not moved by mechanism but motive. Renewing grace does not destroy the order, the subordination, the use of our spiritual powers, but restores, establishes, and sanctifies them."* We are not to *stand* in the way, "in

*Jay.

case God should go by and leave a blessing," but we are to *walk on* in the *path of duty* till we obtain his favour. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. (Prov. 8. 34: Hos. 6. 3: Luke 11. 9.)

Do you say, in reply to this exhibition of duty and encouragement, I am not athirst for the water of life—have no desire for the heavenly feast—no heart to love God? You have confessed the whole difficulty in the way of salvation; and it is a difficulty which you will never overcome except through the aid of renewing grace. The sooner you realize this appalling truth the better. When you feel that there is no barrier between you and God but your own wickedness, and yet this depravity is so great that you certainly will never deliver yourself from it by your own unaided efforts, you will submit to God, and pray for salvation by grace alone; and, having found the object of your agonizing desire, will ascribe the everlasting praise to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. I have directed you to the wells of salvation. Do not deny the force of moral obli-

gation and perish in the neglect of duty. "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment."

> And from above the thunders answer still,
> "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not."

CHAPTER XI.

ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

The plea of inability is not confined to the unrenewed. It is alleged also by the Christian disciple, and operates as a preventive of high spiritual attainments. It must be of great practical importance, therefore, to understand the doctrine of perfection as taught in the Scriptures, and to remove the obstacles which error may have contributed to retard us in the heavenward race.

The strength of moral obligation has obviously increased with the progress of light. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. (John 15. 22.) The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold a greater than Jonas is here. (Matt. 12. 41. with Acts 17. 30.) The same self-evident truth Christ exhibited in his sermon on the mount. He taught the disciples that many things, permitted by the dispensation of Moses, could not be tolerated under the purer light of the gospel. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill;

and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy: But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matt. 5. 21–45.) The test of moral excellence given in these passages is of the most elevated kind. It requires conformity to the divine image, and therefore differs essentially from the standard with which unrenewed men compare themselves. If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (ver. 46–48.) I shall now inquire into the meaning and importance of this injunction.

I. *Its meaning.*

The force of the passage depends chiefly upon the word *perfect.* In the original it is derived from a noun signifying the *end,* or that which is *finished.* But the derivatives from the primitive

word are used in various senses. The apostle Paul uses the same word which in Matt. 5. 48. is translated perfect, to signify maturity of understanding. Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be (τελειοι) men; literally perfect. (1 Cor. 2. 6: 14. 20.) The word perfect also denotes simply the upright, or Christians. Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. (Gen. 6. 9.) Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. (Psa. 37. 37.) Christ says to the young man inquiring what good thing he should do to have eternal life, If thou wilt be (τελειος) perfect, i. e. attain to the moral excellence and blessedness of my disciples, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor. (Matt. 19. 21.) The word signifies likewise to *fulfil*, (Luke 18. 31: Rom. 2. 27.) to *finish*, (John 19. 30: 2 Tim. 4. 7.) to *pay tribute*, (Matt. 17. 24.) to refrain from *evil and improper speaking*. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man. (James 3. 2.) There is one more signification attached to the word perfection which it is important to notice. The apostle John says, (1 4. 18.) There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. In these passages, perfect means *sincere* or *true*, as is manifest from the preceding and following parts

of the chapter. He who sincerely loves God has that assurance of adoption which prevents the fear of being rejected; and he who is disquieted by this fear has not a sufficient degree of love. Such are the principal deviations from the literal sense of the word, which has been considered. In its common acceptation, perfect means complete, finished, faultless. We are now prepared to consider in what sense the Saviour required his disciples to be perfect; or how far Christians are under obligations to be conformed to the character of their heavenly Father.

It is evidently not their duty to attain to equal perfection with God in *wisdom*, *knowledge*, *understanding*, or in any *natural attribute*. These are *impossible* things, and we might as well attempt to tell the stars of heaven, or number the sands on the shore of the sea. Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. (Job 11. 7.) We can approximate the divine image only in knowledge and moral excellence; and in the last alone can we ever be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. The angels are holy as God is holy; so are the spirits of the just made perfect; and this consummation of moral beauty will be the ultimate and eternal inheritance of all the

redeemed. In the present state, Christians are made "partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. 1. 4.) They are created anew, after the image of God, and partially resemble him in holiness. So far as this moral purity prevails, it is a perfection in *kind* corresponding with the divine perfection, although in *degree* it may fall far short of the consummate moral excellence of God. But if none of the saints on earth attain to this absolute perfection, is it their *duty* to become thus perfect? I cannot hesitate in giving to this question an affirmative answer. I dare not otherwise interpret the positive injunction of Christ: Be *ye* therefore perfect, *even as* your Father which is in heaven is perfect. We are evidently directed to exhibit toward our greatest enemies the kindness which God manifests toward the evil and unthankful, that in so doing we may be his children. The same degree of moral excellence is implied in the exhortation to the Ephesians: Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children: and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. (4. 31, 32: 5. 1, 2.) We need not cite similar passages. If the law of

God is not made void through faith, but is rather established, (Rom. 3. 31.) it is evident that we have never been released from the *obligations* of perfect obedience, although grace has removed the *necessity* of such obedience as the ground of acceptance with God. Christ said to the lawyer: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matt. 22. 37–40.) Now are these great requirements, comprehending the duties we owe our Maker and fellow men, still binding in their original force? If the law is holy, just and good, it must be immutable, and can never relinquish jot or tittle of its demands. Its design must be fulfilled either by atonement, penalty, or obedience. Are we then *unable* since the fall to love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves? Are we unable to do this after we have been created anew in Christ Jesus? But if we were pure from sin, we should be perfectly holy—perfectly obedient. Can we plead, then, the necessity of sinning as a reason for not attaining to absolute perfection of moral character? Such a plea will look us in the face at the last judgment. Neither conscience nor God will abate the force of obligation on the ground of remaining depravity. The Scriptures no where teach such a doctrine. How *can* they, and be

worthy of their Author? Take another view of the subject. The disciple whose perpetual theme is love, says: Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him *purifieth* himself, even as he is pure. (1 John 3. 2, 3.) In this perfecting of holiness, can we assign a limit, beyond which we are not obliged to advance? May we look forward to any resting-place in the journey toward the completion of moral loveliness, and say, Hitherto we were required to come, but no further? Our obligations to be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect, are so evident that I need dwell no longer on the subject. God cannot require of us any thing less than entire conformity to his own moral image, without permitting us, in some degree, to violate and neglect the requirements of his law and gospel. And such permission would be a virtual acknowledgment that the sum of present duty consists in partial obedience. What use would the sinner and the lukewarm disciple make of this concession from the High and Holy One? Does the reader ask, Who then can be perfect? I am demonstrating the extent of moral obligation—illustrating the revealed truth that, "having the promises," we are required to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh

and spirit, *perfecting* holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7. 1.) Is it objected that we are wholly dependent on *grace* for every good word and work? I admit the precious truth. It is the grand incentive and encouragement to godlike attainments. The apostles believed more fully and firmly than we the doctrine of entire dependence; but this, so far from checking them in the Christian race, urged them onward to the goal with the greater diligence and the more infallible assurance of gaining the reward."* (Isa. 40. 28–31: 1 Cor. 9. 24–27: 2 Cor. 12. 10.)

* "I most cordially subscribe to the doctrine of divine influence, not in the lax sense in which it is admitted by all that make any pretensions to religion; but in the stricter meaning of the word. I believe that all good is derived from and perpetuated by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Yet this doctrine is frequently expressed by preachers and writers in a way that is not perfectly just. Every thing is referred, not efficiently but immediately, to God. We are wrought upon, not employed. We are passively blessed, not actuated to exertion. The means which idolatrously keep some from the God of all grace are discarded by others. The motive, we are aware, cannot be too much praised; as it is designed to secure the glory of God. But if it needs not to be purified, it requires to be enlightened. It should be remembered that God does not operate less *really* because he operates *instrumentally*. The means are his own, as well as the success of them. And the production of an effect by a series of means deriving their operation and their being from God, instead of detracting from his glory, displays it much more than a sudden result without any intervention. The one proves his omnipotence—the other shows also his wisdom and condescension. The one astonishes—the other instructs. The one requires nothing—the other calls for prayer and obedience. Some seem to view the means of grace as mere tests of obedience; mere arbitrary expedients,

Before I consider the importance of the injunction which has been illustrated, it may be profitable to inquire whether any of the saints in the present state have attained to complete perfection. This will depend on the meaning of certain passages of Scripture. The apostle John says, (1 3. 9.) Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. According to Peter, the *word* of which we are born, is the living and incorruptible seed; (1 1. 23.) and the influence of this word abides in the regenerate, keeping them from sin. But does John mean that they who are born of God commit *no sin?* Or does he mean that they cannot allow themselves in transgression—cannot love and practise iniquity habitually like the wicked? In the very next verse, he describes the difference between saints and sinners. The saint doeth

which, however used, leave it perfectly uncertain whether any advantage can be derived from them. We are to regard them as a way in which we are to stand, in case God should go by and leave a blessing; not as a road leading to an end which we certainly and naturally approach if we walk on in it. The labours of the husbandman are vain without the divine blessing: but there is a vast difference between his sowing *flints* and his sowing *corn*. A crop, by the influence of heaven, not only attends the seed, but grows out of it." (Jay's Remarks.) So it is with the means of grace, adds this sensible writer; and we cannot dissent from him, unless we deny that they are adapted to the *end;* in which case they could not be entitled to the name of *means*.

righteousness—the sinner doeth not righteousness. *This* explains his meaning. But how does he commence his epistle? If we say that we *have no sin*, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we *have not sinned*, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1. 8–10.) Now if they who are born of God cannot commit sin, why should they *confess* sin? And why do they deceive themselves, if fixing on the *present*, they say "we have no sin?"—and looking at the *past*, make God a liar, by saying "we have not sinned?" Still more, why should the apostle add in the next verse, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous?" It is quite apparent that he is not maintaining the doctrine of "sinless perfection," but that the saints strive against sin, and press forward, purifying themselves as Christ is pure. Other passages seeming to imply that saints have become absolutely perfect on earth, have been already explained; and none of them express more than the language of the epistle just noticed. I will now cite a few passages which show that the righteous do not become wholly pure in this world of trial. Paul might lay as fair a claim to perfection, as any man; yet *he* says, Not as though I had already attained, either

were already perfect; but I follow after—I press toward the mark. (Phil. 3. 12–14.) And what say the ancient saints? There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. (Eccl. 7. 20.) Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin? (Prov. 20. 9.) If they sin against thee, (for there is *no man* that *sinneth not.*) 1 Kings 8. 46.) We must conclude, then, that the most eminent Christians are not entirely free from moral pollution in this life. There are moments when the whole heart may be filled with the love of God, and every desire may be consecrated to his service. In the parting moment, too, between time and eternity, the work of sanctification probably is completed—but on their pilgrimage, we have no satisfactory evidence that the saints become (some transitory moments possibly excepted) holy as the angels, or the spirits of the just made perfect. *That* unspeakable blessedness, I apprehend, is reserved till the plaudit of their admission into the celestial city. I shall now illustrate,

II. *The importance of the Saviour's injunction.*

This, as we have seen, must be literally interpreted, and consequently it is the duty of the Christian to advance in holiness till he attains to the moral perfection of his Father in heaven. The obligation implied in the command must be

admitted because the moral excellence of God affords,

1. *The only sure test of Christian character.*

Pure and undefiled religion is holiness. The degree of piety therefore is exactly measured by the degree of conformity to the divine image. And he who does not compare himself with God, when he examines the foundation of his hope, must rely upon a fallacious standard. Does he seek for his pattern of holiness the apparently most eminent saint, and rest contented with such a measurement? The test which he has selected may be deceptive in two respects. He does not certainly know that his exemplar is a Christian. "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." But if he is not deceived on this important point, his comparison must be superficial. He does not know the heart of any man, and the outward and at best but imperfect conduct of others cannot be safe as a rule by which to determine his own inward character. We *dare* not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves *by* themselves, and comparing themselves *among* themselves, are not wise. (2 Cor. 10. 12.) If therefore we do not make the divine perfection our example and standard of comparison, we can find nothing perfect to guide us. And if we cast off the obligation to become wholly conformed to the moral

image of God, we shall seek some fallacious test of character. We shall settle down upon the error, that only a partial perfection is required in our fallen state, and relying with unseemly complacency upon "a perfection which after all is no perfection," the consequence may be a feeling of groundless security and a delusive hope of salvation.

2. *The admission of the obligation which has been considered, is necessary in order to a proper estimate of the evil of sin and the riches of grace.*

The stainless purity of God, and the reflection that such was man as he came from the hand of his Maker, demonstrates the depth of our apostacy. If we admit also that our entire depravity is voluntary and consequently inexcusable, and that it is our duty to measure back again the fearful distance between us and our injured Father, we shall understand something of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin;" and something of the height and depth, and length and breadth, of that love which brought the Son of God into the "far country" of the prodigal to procure, at the expense of many sorrows, his return to the parental dwelling. But if we can justify ourselves, on any ground, in rendering only a stinted measure of obedience, we can neither take to ourselves shame and confusion of face, nor magnify the grace which bringeth salvation.

3. *Belief in the duty of Christian perfection is necessary to high spiritual attainments.*

The vigour and diligence of effort correspond with the magnitude of the object to be accomplished. He who makes the perfection of God his test of moral character, and feels the obligation to become holy as He is holy, will have an object in view capable of exciting the most ardent desire, and producing the most unremitting perseverance. He will fix his eye on the topmost round of the ladder which Jacob saw in vision, and climb till he has entered into the abode of angels. (Gen. 28. 12.) But he who regulates his conduct in accordance with the doctrine that perfection in this life is neither required nor to be made an object of pursuit, will rest contented with a small degree of piety. The highest point in the scale of moral excellence at which he aims, will be the imitation of some fellow Christian of kindred sentiments, whom he has made an example instead of Christ. He will neglect many duties, and assigning for the neglect a criminal infirmity, will make sin an excuse for sin. It is perilous therefore to circumscribe the duty of growth in grace, by any limits short of absolute perfection. Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? *So run that ye may obtain.* (1 Cor. 9. 24–27.) By slothfulness in the Christian race, you not merely neglect a

positive command and hazard the loss of the crown at the goal—you rob yourselves of present and unspeakable happiness. They who speed their heavenward course may joyfully sing—

> We purge our mortal dross away—
> Refining as we run.

The imagination and the pen of an angel might find ample employment in describing the blessedness of the firm, faithful, diligent Christian. Such an one have I recently seen, and the impression which he made can fade away only with the last traces of memory. He was an aged disciple—had spent the common age of man in adorning a Christian profession, and had measured a score beyond the three-score years and ten. In the full possession of his ripened faculties, and exhibiting the accumulated treasures of holy wisdom, he seemed the patriarch of ancient days. He had ascended the high places of Israel, and was leaning on his staff almost at the end of his pilgrimage, while the rays of the setting sun were shining around his hoary locks, "a crown of glory." (Prov. 16. 31.) Such are the incipient rewards of a long life of godliness. But what a magnificent spectacle is presented to the eye in a *band* of established Christians! Theirs is not the progress of "pilgrims feeble and way-worn, struggling up the rude mountains, and shrinking

from the wintry blast." It is the march of angels:

> On they move,
> Indissolubly firm; nor obvious hill,
> Nor strait'ning vale, nor wood, nor stream divides
> Their perfect ranks.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE MODE OF BAPTISM.

THE kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 14. 17.) These few, but significant words, might appropriately be inscribed on a tablet and suspended by the side of every altar. As they met the eye of the worshipper, they would proclaim a vastly important and much forgotten truth—'*The duties, employments, and glories of Messiah's kingdom are* SPIRITUAL: the substance of the law and the prophets is *love to God*, and *good will to man.*' It was the object of the apostle to divert the attention of his Christian brethren from *abrogated* ceremonies: but if the kingdom of grace is *righteousness*, and *peace*, and *joy in the Holy Ghost*, it must be evident that the observance of *mere external rites*, whether disannulled or required, can bear little proportion in importance to practical godliness. The ceremonies of worship are adapted to the church in the present state, and have varied and decreased as the spiritual nature of religion has been developed by successive revelations. External rites, it should be remembered, have a spiritual meaning and are designed

to produce a spiritual effect. Had the Christian world been zealous to explain and guard against perversion, the true signification of outward ordinances, they would have rendered an important service to pure and undefiled religion. But unhappily for the prosperity of Zion, the attention of her children has been often occupied with *names*, and *forms*, and *modes*, to the ruinous neglect of righteousness, and peace, and holy love. I do not design to intimate that institutions of divine appointment are unimportant. It is my object, in unfolding the truth so briefly expressed by the apostle, to illustrate the essential difference between religion and its symbols—to show that the *form* bears no comparison with the *power* of godliness. On the ground of importance, for instance, what comparison can there be between bestowing the external rite of baptism upon all nations, and that exhibition of the gospel which is the wisdom of God and the power of God to every one that believeth? It will be profitable to keep in remembrance these introductory remarks, through the present and succeeding chapter, lest we lose the *spirit* of religion while examining its outward *forms*.

I shall consider briefly, the *signification* of baptism, before I proceed to the *mode*.*

* It can hardly be necessary to inform the reader that little original information can be expected on a subject which has for years enlisted, on opposite sides, the ablest minds. It was not

The word is used in various senses. Sometimes it denotes, like the term faith, a system of doctrines. Thus the dispensation of John is called baptism, probably from the fact that this ordinance occupied a prominent place in his ministry. (Acts 18. 25: Luke 3. 3.) The Jewish ablutions, or purifyings, are called in the original divers baptisms. (Heb. 9. 10.) Christ uses the word when he speaks of his approaching sufferings. (Luke 12. 50.) It denotes also in some instances, simply the purifying influence of the Spirit. (Acts 22. 16: John 2. 5.) The Jews were baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea. (1 Cor. 10. 2.) This signified a profession of obedience to Moses as their divinely appointed leader, and an acknowledgment of faith in his doctrines. If baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, implies the same, it furnishes incontestable evidence that these Three are the One God. Otherwise we profess equal obedience to God, to one of his own attri-

my intention to introduce "the doctrine of baptisms," but men of sound judgment deemed it expedient. I shall confine my attention chiefly to the Scriptures, and from the limits assigned to this work, must necessarily be concise. A more extended view of the subject can be obtained by consulting some of the following writers: Wall, Worcester, Woods, Pond, Hamilton, and Jerram. The work of this last writer is an interesting little volume in the form of conversations, lately republished. The Scripture Directory, by a Layman, is also valuable in respect to the mode of baptism.

butes, and to a created being. The pious mind will feel no hesitancy in admitting that the Three who bear record in heaven, and who are associated in the ordinance of baptism—in the benediction—and in the work of redemption, constitute the incomprehensible and "lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." Christian baptism, then, is a peculiar institution. It denotes salvation by grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus. It implies faith in him as our only Saviour—the acknowledgment of God as our merciful Father—dependence on the Spirit as the only Sanctifier. It implies purity of heart, and the necessity of purity. Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6. 3, 4.) In its spiritual meaning, baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, (bodily ablution,) but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3. 21.) There is a difference also between the *sign* and *seal* of baptism. Paul says that Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised. (Rom. 4. 11.) The righteousness of faith, therefore, was signi-

fied, and sealed or confirmed by the circumcision. But the rite, when applied to children and households who had not the righteousness of Abraham, although it signified the covenant mercy of God and a visible relation to his kingdom, could not be a seal of faith which did not exist. So in baptism, as it relates to adults, if the subject is qualified he believes in Christ before he comes to the ordinance, and receives baptism as a sign and seal of the faith which he had while unbaptized. But when baptism is applied to the children of the saints, who are not capable of believing, it is a *sign* of their dedication to God according to his covenant, but not a *seal* of faith. It is important to observe, likewise, that the early Christian writers use the word baptism as synonymous with regeneration. The Scriptures do not authorize this, nor do they teach us that regeneration, or the new heart, follows as a consequent from the performance of the outward rite. The rite itself is symbolical of the necessary and purifying agency of the Spirit, and presupposes faith (in those who have come to years of maturity) as an indispensable qualification for its observance. An unbeliever, receiving Christian baptism, would be as much out of place as a rebel wearing the badge of loyalty. As it regards the baptism of infants, their subsequent life generally proves that they were not born of the Spirit at the time they received the sign of the covenant.

We pass now to the *mode* of baptism.

It is readily admitted that if God has clearly revealed the precise *manner* and *form* in which he would have this ordinance administered, we ought not to deviate from his instructions. This is the present object of inquiry. Since much reliance is placed upon the baptism of John, as decisive of the proper mode of administration, I shall first examine the ground of this confidence. Two things must be considered: Was the baptism of John *Christian baptism?* and did he *immerse* the multitudes who became his disciples? It has been assumed that John's baptism and that instituted by Christ are the same. But is this a matter of fact? That it is not I shall show by stating the substance of the invincible arguments advanced on this subject by Robert Hall.* His reasoning is entitled to serious consideration, not merely because he was the ornament of the Baptist church—he was second to none in his day for ardour of devotion and eminence of talents.

I. *John received his commission to baptize from the Father.*

I knew him (Christ) not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. (John 1. 33.) The apostles received their commission to baptize

* On Terms of Communion, p. 24-50: edition of 1816.

from Christ, but not till after his resurrection. They did indeed baptize before the crucifixion, but not in the name of their Lord. The baptism which they administered must have corresponded with the baptism of John. Otherwise, two different dispensations of religion were in existence at one time, for John and the disciples of Christ baptized at the same period. (John 3. 22, 23 with 4. 2.) Now if the same confession of faith was not enjoined by John and the disciples of Christ, the disciples of John were under obligations to believe *one* system of religion, and the disciples of Christ *another*. This would be at variance with the whole history of the church; for the different dispensations have followed each other in harmonious succession, so that no two of them have been in force at the same time. The Patriarchal was superseded by the Mosaic, and the Mosaic by the Christian. It is worthy of notice, too, that John and Christ and his disciples used the same language in their preaching. (Matt. 3. 1, 2: 4. 17: 10. 5–7.) But if John baptized before he knew Christ, he could not, as is obvious, have received his authority from the Messiah for the administration of this ordinance. There is, then, this remarkable difference between the baptism of John and that instituted by the Saviour: John received his commission to baptize from the Father—the apostles received their commission from Christ, after he had risen from the sepulchre.

II. *The* DESIGN *of John's baptism was widely different from that of* CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

He came to prepare the way of the Lord, as the herald precedes the king. His ministry was the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths strait. (Luke 3. 4.) I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, *therefore* am I come baptizing with water.—The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. (John 1. 31–33.) From the multitudes which John baptized it is rational to conclude that the rite administered by him required less qualifications than are demanded of those who receive Christian baptism. John preached repentance, and required of his disciples a disposition to believe in him who *had not yet come.* Christian baptism includes a profession of faith in him *who has come*—a belief in the doctrines, sufferings, death and resurrection of Christ. Christian baptism was followed by the gift of the Holy Ghost—that of John was not. This gift was not given till Christ was glorified. (John 7. 39.) And John says: I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. (Matt. 3. 11.)

III. *Christian baptism was administered in the name of Jesus, that of John was not.*

The Messenger says that he did not know Christ. How then could he baptize his disciples in the name of him whom he did not know? Even after the Messiah had appeared, there is no evidence that he permitted either John or his own disciples to baptize in his name. Had he given such a commission, it would have been a public acknowledgment of his character and office inconsistent with the reserve which he always maintained on that subject. At a late period of his ministry, he inquires of his disciples: Whom say the people that I am? They, answering, said, John the Baptist: but some say Elias; and others say that one of the old prophets is risen again. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter, answering, said, The Christ of God. And he straitly charged them and commanded them to tell no man that thing. (Luke 9. 18–21.) The succeeding verse intimates that if Christ had publicly confessed himself in his true character, the Jews would not have dared to crucify him; and had they been deterred from killing the Prince of Life through the full knowledge of his character, the counsels of God would have been frustrated. When Peter charges them with the guilt of unheard-of murder, he says: Brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. (Acts 3. 17.) Paul confirms this: Which none of the princes of this world knew (the wisdom of God in a mystery;)

for, had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. (1 Cor. 2. 8.) When Christ was brought before the high priest Caiaphas, and answered nothing, he said, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus intimated obscurely the truth. (Matt. 26. 63.) This collected evidence is decisive that he did not publicly and explicitly confess his true character. None therefore were baptized in his name previous to his resurrection. While fulfilling his work of humiliation, he said, If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. The same works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. (John 5. 31, 36.)

But it is very probable that some of John's disciples were among the three thousand baptized at the Pentecost. If so, why were they *re-baptized?* But, not to dwell on this rational supposition, there is an essential distinction between Christian baptism and that of John, recorded in Acts ch. 19. Paul, finding at Ephesus certain disciples, inquired if they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed. They replied, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost—a plain confession that they had never received Christian baptism. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism

of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. All the men were about twelve. (ver. 2–7.) Now if these disciples of John had once been baptized in the name of Christ, what reason can be given for a repetition of the same ordinance? The plain matter of fact is that the baptism of John was essentially different from the Christian rite, and therefore it was proper for his disciples to be baptized in the name of Christ. I do not notice the pains sometimes taken to evade the force of the passages just considered, for I am ashamed that such an unaccountable prejudice against plain truth should find a resting-place in the bosom of the Christian church.

It is evident that the baptism of John has been entirely superseded by Christian baptism, and his dispensation, consequently, must have occupied a temporary space between the Jewish dispensation and the establishment of the Christian. His was a work preparatory to the coming of Messiah—for he is called the forerunner and the messenger of the Lord—and when the Lord had come, and set up his kingdom, his course was finished. The writer of the Acts says, As John fulfilled (completed) his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his

feet I am not worthy to loose. (13. 25.) John himself bears more explicit testimony to this truth: They came and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. *He* must *increase*, but *I* must decrease. (John 3. 26–30.) Nothing can be plainer than that the dispensation of this meek and holy messenger became extinct, and his remaining followers were soon incorporated with the disciples of Christ. His Lord declared that none had been greater than he, and yet the least in his kingdom was greater. (Matt. 11. 11.) The meaning is, that John was more honoured than any of the prophets, inasmuch as he prepared the immediate way of the Lord; but the least of those who were his disciples, and dwelt in his society, were more honoured still. The herald of the king has the pre-eminence in dignity with respect to those who are not thus employed, but the least in the royal train occupies a still more magnificent station.

I remark now that the plain inference derived from the truth which has been established is, that if John baptized by immersion, we are not obliged to follow his example. Christian baptism is essentially different, and the mode might vary from that practised by him. Neither are we required to follow the example of Christ, even were it proved that he was buried in the waters of Jordan. The mere application of water, in *any manner*, is not baptism. The ordinance has a meaning. What then did the baptism of Christ signify? Obviously it could represent neither regeneration, nor faith, nor admission into the church; nor could the rite have been administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It could not have been John's baptism unto repentance, nor Christian baptism.* Properly speaking, the baptism of Christ is no more binding upon us than his circumcision—neither of which could we imitate in their signification as applied to him, and why should we be solicitous to follow the mere shell of an ordi-

*Christ submitted to circumcision, and other Mosaic rites, because that dispensation was still in force; and he could not be an accredited teacher, in the esteem of men, without observing the ceremonial law and the law of the priesthood. He waited till he was of the requisite age before he entered on his public ministry, (Num. 4. 3: Luke 3. 23.) and was consecrated to his office according to the manner prescribed for the Levites. (Levit. 8. 6.) I suppose this to be the design of his baptism; and that, for the reasons specified, he said, Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness—*legal* and *ceremonial*.

nance? I have not admitted that John *did* baptize by immersion, for I cannot think this is capable of demonstration. He baptized *with* water, an expression implying rather that the water was applied to the subject, than that the subject was applied to the water. And when we consider the multitudes who came to him, it is evident that he would need a river and a place of "many waters" (ὑδατα πολλα) for their accommodation, if he baptized them in any manner. (John 3. 23.) But if "Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, were baptized of him," (Matt. 3. 5, 6.) how could he endure the fatigue of immersing them all? I shall dwell no longer on this part of the subject, for the baptism of John terminated at the institution of the Christian rite, and we must inquire of the prophets and apostles for the manner of performing this latter ordinance.

What then is the *scriptural mode* of baptism? If it can be positively decided that any one invariable mode is divinely appointed, the evidence of such a fact must be derived either from the meaning of the original word describing the ordinance; or from some explicit declarations of Scripture; or from the circumstances of baptism recorded; or from incidental allusions to baptism; or from the signification of the rite. We are to examine,

I. *The meaning of the original word.*

This word (βαπτιζω) derived from βαπτω signifies immersion. If it had no other meaning, there could be no diversity of opinion in respect to the subject under consideration. I do not think it important to notice the difference between the primitive and the derivative, because both of the words are used in various senses, and both of them sometimes signify immersion. If either of them was used in one invariable sense, it would be a plain duty to ascertain and abide by its meaning. But the evangelist Mark says that the Pharisees, when they come from the market, except they wash (βαπτισωνται) eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing (βαπτισμους, baptisms) of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and tables, i. e. beds, or couches. (Mark 7. 4.) The Jewish purifyings are also called baptisms, but only a small quantity of water was used. The water-pots at Cana, "set there after the manner of purifying of the Jews," contained but "two or three firkins apiece." (John 2. 6.) The "divers washings" (Heb. 9. 10.) were (διαφόροις βαπτισμοῖς) various baptisms. It is said that Judas dipped (ἐμβαψας, baptized) his hand in the dish, i. e. put in his fingers to take the sop. (Matt. 26. 23.) Nebuchadnezzar was wet with the dew of heaven. (Dan. 5. 21.) The Hebrew literally signifies to wet, or moisten; and in the Septuagint, the corresponding word is ἐβαφε (baptized.) It must be

admitted that the Jews had a competent knowledge both of their own and the Greek language. Since the words translated baptism, therefore, are used with such latitude of signification, nothing positive respecting the mode of baptism can be derived from this source.

II. *The circumstances of baptism recorded.*

It has been often affirmed that the eunuch was immersed. (Acts 8. 38.) "They went down *both into* the water, both Philip and the eunuch." Philip then, went into the water by *stepping* in. The eunuch might have done the same. Had he been baptized by sprinkling, or pouring, they might both have gone into the water; and this, interpreting the language according to common usage, does not signify *under* water. But the original proves nothing more than that they descended (εις το υδωρ) *to* the water, and ascended (εκ του υδατος) *from* the water. The preposition translated *out of* often signifies *from*, and the word translated *into*, in the second verse from that which records the baptism, is rendered *at* and *to*. "Philip was found (εις Αζωτον) at Azotus—and came (εις Καισάρειαν) to Cesarea." The word translated "out of" is used in the passage which declares that the queen of the south "came (εκ) *from* the uttermost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon." (Matt. 12. 42.)

The circumstances of Paul's baptism do not at all favour the idea that he was baptized by im-

mersion. He had been "three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." (Acts 9. 18.) It is not probable that, in this weak and sickly condition, he went out and was plunged in a river; besides, the original intimates that he was baptized in the house where Ananias found him. He arose, (*αναστας*, rising, or having risen up,) he was baptized.

The case of the jailor is still more conclusive against immersion. There is neither evidence nor probability that Paul and Silas left the prison. They refused to depart in the morning till the magistrate released them. When the jailor was awaked by the earthquake, he called for a light, and sprang in. These several circumstances make it evident that the house of the jailor was an apartment of the prison, or adjacent to it. Here he was baptized; and there is no evidence that he was immersed in a bath, or in any reservoir of water.

The circumstances attending the baptism of Christ, and of John's disciples, do not decide that immersion was the mode. If Christ went up straitway *out of* the water, it may be replied that the preposition *απο*, translated out of, usually signifies *from;* and therefore the original proves nothing more than that he went down *to* the water, and ascended the rising ground *from* the river. (Matt. 3. 16.) If it be said that John baptized *in* Jordan, it is sufficient to answer that the

same word (ἐν) is translated *at* in Rom. 8. 34: "Christ is even (ἐν δεξια του Θεου) *at* the right hand of God." This language therefore only makes it certain that John baptized at the river Jordan. In Acts, (10. 47.) also, when Peter asks if any man can forbid water, the most rational interpretation is, Can any forbid water *to be brought*, that "these should not be baptized?"

III. *There are frequent allusions to the rite of baptism.*

Christ compares his approaching sufferings to the water used in this ordinance. (Luke 12. 50.) Here the original is the derivative from βαπτω; but as it represents the inexpressible sorrows of the Redeemer, it implies that the quantity of water used in baptism must have been considerable. Sufferings must be poured upon me like baptismal water; or, I must be drenched in agonies. It is one of the strongest passages which can be adduced in evidence that immersion or affusion was the mode of baptism.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is also called baptism. (Acts 1. 5.) Peter explains the wonders at the Pentecost, by referring to the prophet Joel. (2. 28–32.) It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh. (Acts 2. 17.) Christ, "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth (εξεχεε, *poured out*) this

which ye now see and hear." (ver. 33.) So in Isaiah: (44. 3.) I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. The influence of the Spirit, signified by baptism, is here compared to a shower. So it is in the 77th Psalm, which describes the baptism of the Jews unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea. (1 Cor. 10. 2.) The Jewish purifyings, many of which were sprinklings, represented the atoning blood of Christ; and the same is signified by baptism. But the prophets foretold that Christ should sprinkle many nations, using clean water, and purify them from all their filthiness. (Isa. 52. 15: Ezek. 36. 25. with 1 Pet. 1. 2: Heb. 9. 13, 14.) The passage in Rom. 6. 3.* is supposed by some to prove that immersion is the Scripture mode of baptism. But the apostle is speaking of death and burial unto sin, and a resurrection to newness of life, which is signified by receiving baptism in the

* Hall thinks (Terms of Communion, p. 51) this passage implies that some Christians had not been baptized into Christ. The apostles might have been baptized by John; but, as Christ did not baptize, his disciples must have baptized each other, or the *twelve* never received Christian baptism. The Scriptures are silent, and the probable conjecture is that they were not baptized in the name of Christ. Paul thanks God that he administered this rite only to a few. If he employed any one to baptize for him, as some suppose, he would have done it through his agent, as Christ is said to have baptized when his disciples did. These things teach us not to magnify *outward ceremonies*.

name of Christ. He says also that as many as have been baptized into Christ have *put on* Christ. (Gal. 3. 27.) He says of himself: I am *crucified* with Christ. (Gal. 2. 20.) These passages, compared with Coloss. 2. 11, 12, will bring us to the conclusion that the words *buried*, *circumcised*, and *crucified*, are used in a figurative sense, and decide nothing positively respecting the mode of baptism. Neither can we learn this from the *signification of the rite*. *Purity*, and the *necessity* of purity, can be represented as well by a small as a large quantity of water. (Ezek. 36. 25: John 13. 10.) And *finally*, we cannot learn the precise mode of baptism from any explicit declarations of Scripture. Eye-witnesses did not need this instruction, and the Holy Spirit did not see fit to lay before us the temptation of relying on *forms*, by transmitting the *exact model* of apostolic performance. The result of our inquiries is, that the *quantity* of water used must be unimportant if, in other respects, the ordinance is rightly performed. Baptism by *immersion*, *affusion*, or *sprinkling*, is acceptable, with a pure heart and faith unfeigned. If we are not now required to wash the feet of the saints, and may celebrate the Supper in the day-time instead of the night, and in a church instead of an upper room, and may substitute a *morsel* for a *meal*, we need not be rigidly scrupulous concerning the mere manner of applying the water of baptism.

In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. (Gal. 5. 6: 6. 15.)

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

So far as the mature in understanding are concerned, there is no doubt in regard to the qualifications necessary to baptism. All who are capable of understanding the gospel, are required *first* to believe in Christ, and then to receive baptism in his name, as the seal of the righteousness of faith. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. (Mark 16. 16.) But there remains a distinct object of inquiry. Are the saints permitted to dedicate their infant children to God in the application of the baptismal rite? This question is not decided by the commission to preach the gospel in all the world, baptizing every believer. The instructions given to the apostles had reference, obviously and necessarily, to those who were capable of receiving the gospel. Otherwise infants must be excluded from salvation, for they could not understand and believe the gospel were it preached to them; and if faith is indispensable, there is no hope in their case. But if infants can be *saved* without believing the gospel, they may, also, so far as the apostolic commission is concerned, be *baptized* without believing the gospel.

The propriety of infant baptism, it is admitted, is not established by any positive command; neither is it expressly stated that the apostles baptized infants. The authority for this practice depends on the correctness of the assumption that *the church under every dispensation has been essentially the same, and that the principle of infant baptism, involved in circumcision, was designed to be perpetuated in the new token of the covenant.* I shall consider,

I. *The identity of the Jewish and Christian churches.*

If we admit that personal holiness has always been necessary to salvation, and that none have entered into life except by the grace of God, it is evident that the righteous, from the first, have possessed one character, and have been subjects of the same spiritual kingdom. Successive changes of rites and forms there have been, and successive revelations and orders of teachers. But this no more destroys the sameness of the church, than a change of garments and conduct destroys personal identity. The kingdom of God is, and ever has been, righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Holiness is the substance of its requirements and the sum of its blessedness. And has not holiness been required under every dispensation, Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian? It has been said that the Jewish ceremonies were external merely, and

are to be regarded as a badge of national distinction, rather than as imposing moral obligations. But this is far from the truth. In the 50th Psalm God admits that sacrifices and burnt offerings had been perpetuated before him, but he says, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast *thou* to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth?" So in Isaiah, (chap. 1.) God says, "Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes." It is plain, then, that the sacrifices and rites under the former dispensation had a spiritual meaning, involved moral obligations, and that obedience was better than sacrifice. (1 Sam. 15. 22: Hos. 6. 6.) The decalogue is sufficient proof that holiness was required in the ancient church, for every member of it was commanded to love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself. The truth under consideration, is still further illustrated by the signification of *circumcision*. It had a spiritual meaning. This is evident from the reasons given for the institution of the rite. (Gen. 17. 1–14.) Other passages are more explicit. The Lord had a delight in thy

fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked. For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible, who regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. (Deut. 10. 15–17.) The same command is repeated (Jer. 4. 4.) with a terrible threatening for disobedience. See also what is said of the uncircumcised in heart and in flesh. (Ezek. 44. 6, 7.) The apostles use the same language. He is not a Jew which is one *outwardly;* neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one *inwardly:* and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God. (Rom. 2. 28, 29.) Circumcision as described (Coloss. 2. 11–13.) had wholly a spiritual signification.

But the fact that there has been but one church in the world is obvious from *the covenant made with Abraham.*

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that

we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren I speak after the manner of men; Though it be a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promise made. He saith not, And to *seeds*, as of many; but as of *one*, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, That the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. (Gal. 3: 4. 28.) The covenant made with Abraham, then, which is everlasting, was renewed and confirmed in Christ, while the "meats and drinks, and divers washings and carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation" are annulled. (Heb. 8. and 9: Coloss. 2. 14.: Ephes. 2. 15.)

We may add further that many promises contained in the Abrahamic covenant *are yet to be fulfilled.* The seed of Abraham includes the whole multitude of Christians, and they have not become in number as "the stars of heaven," and "the sands of the sea." The promises therefore

have not received their full accomplishment. The Jews especially are not gathered under the wings of the covenant. God saith, Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. (Jer. 30. 20.) My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore. (Ezek. 37. 27, 28.) The covenant, or church from which they have been separated for unbelief, is compared to an olive tree, and they are the broken branches. (Rom. 11.) But they shall be "graffed in again"—not into a *new* tree, but into their *own native olive*. They will be restored to the church of Abraham their father—the church of the prophets, disencumbered of carnal ordinances, spiritualized, adorned, enlarged by the hosts of Gentile believers. This is the tree which was so small when it was planted by the water-courses. But it is destined to become the joy and the praise of the whole earth—its leaves shall be for the healing of the nations, and ere long the "outcasts of Israel," with their weary, wandering children, shall strike their harps for joy as they sweetly repose under its branches.

One thing further is worthy of notice. There is no evidence that a *new church*, distinct from

the *Jewish*, has *ever been organized*. On the day of Pentecost "about three thousand souls were added," and it is written in the same chapter, that the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2. 47.) What church could this be but that established from the beginning, reformed and spiritualized? The evidence is complete, that there has been but one and the same church from Abraham to the present hour, and Christ has been its Head, its glory, and defence. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Rev. 19. 10.) The gospel therefore must be regarded as a continuation and improvement of the Jewish Scriptures; and as in a revised constitution every article that remains unaltered is equally binding with the new, so every part of the Old Testament which is not nullified by the New remains in full force. I shall now endeavour to show,

II. *That the principle of infant baptism involved in the rite of circumcision was designed to be perpetuated in the new token of the covenant.*

It has been demonstrated that circumcision and baptism have the same spiritual meaning, and since the covenant made with Abraham was everlasting, it is rational to conclude that the baptismal rite, succeeding that of circumcision, must be equally extensive in its application. This is the fair inference, and if the Scriptures do not teach us otherwise, we are at liberty so to apply

the rite. All things considered, we should expect infant baptism to follow infant circumcision as a matter of course, unless prohibited. The Jews would continue to initiate their children into the everlasting covenant, using, if they were Christians, the *new* instead of the *abrogated* token. A positive command to this effect, therefore, would be neither necessary, nor looked for. A positive prohibition would be expected, and if the Scriptures contain none, we must conclude that they sanction the propriety of infant baptism. There are many reasons to conclude that the practice was introduced in this natural and quiet manner, and that the apostles themselves did baptize the children of the saints. I shall consider,

1. *The silence of the Scriptures.*

In some cases, and this is one, silence is powerful argumentation. The unbelieving Jews alleged every thing they could against the gospel; but they do not object that it excluded their children from the covenant. There is at least no record of any such allegation; and if there was ground for it, it is unaccountable that they did not bring it forward—or if they did add this to their many cavils, it is unaccountable that the Scriptures say nothing in reply. On the supposition that it was an established principle in the church, that children were to be dedicated to God in baptism, as they had been in circumcision, the silence of Christ and the apostles is easily

explained. But if the gospel cut off children from their visible relation to the covenant, it is extremely difficult to assign the reason that this important change is never once alluded to. All other history is silent, also, respecting the commencement of infant baptism. It is admitted by all that the practice can be traced back within a hundred years of the apostles; but *how*, *when*, and by *whom* this custom was introduced into the churches is not positively ascertained. Here is a wonder to be explained:—a river has flowed for ages from an undiscovered source, a Nile in the spiritual world. We must not say it is impure at the head, unless the waters are insalubrious. But why is the origin unknown? Is it not because modern travellers terminate their researches short of the perpetual fountain opened for Abraham and his spiritual family? We say of infant baptism, Whence is it? From heaven, or of men? If it is a continuation of the rite of circumcision under a new form, and sanctioned by apostolic example, like the change of the Sabbath and female baptism; the wonder arising from the silence of the Scriptures vanishes. If it was introduced since the age of the apostles, history has done a new thing under the sun in neglecting the record. Suppose a hundred years after the apostles, some teacher had laboured to substitute circumcision for baptism in the Christian church, and had gained many proselytes; is

it possible that no account of such errors should have been transmitted to posterity? But Dr. Wall, whose able and faithful historical work has been approved for about a century, says, "For the first four hundred years there appears only one man, Tertullian, who advised the delay of infant baptism in some cases, and one Gregory who did perhaps practise such delay in the case of his own children; but no society of men so thinking, or so practising, or any one man saying it was unlawful to baptize infants." The silence of the Scriptures and of ecclesiastical history, in my apprehension, is one of the strongest arguments in favour of this ancient custom.

2. *The children of believers sustain a relation to God and the church, different from the relation sustained by the children of unbelievers.*

This is evident in the institution of circumcision. God declared that the uncircumcised man-child should be cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant. (Gen. 17. 14.) God has always, in his dispensations, regarded this peculiar relation. See Gen. 6. 1: Isa. 65. 23: Rom. 11. 28. Christ also said: Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven, i. e. of grace. (Matt. 19. 14.) This is a plain intimation that children sustain some relation to Christ's kingdom, and are in some sense entitled to its privileges. In another passage he says that

adults must become, in order to be saved, like little children, mild, teachable, confiding. (Matt. 18. 3.) This also implies what was stated in the passage just explained. See also Mark. 10. 15. These three references may be compared with 1 Cor. 7. 14: "Else were your children *unclean*, but now are they *holy*." If these children of a believing parent were *personally* holy, they had a right to baptism. If they were *ceremonially* holy, it was proper to signify by a public rite that they were set apart, or dedicated to the Lord. Much has been said of the word meaning *legitimate*, but it does not correspond with the tenor of the apostle's reasoning. There is little doubt that *holy* in this passage agrees with the Hebrew, and signifies a seed set apart for God; holy in a ceremonial or covenant relation. Such is the belief of the ablest commentators. Now if there is in *fact* a peculiar relation existing between God and the children of the saints, and if believing parents are under peculiar obligations to train up their offspring in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, why should not this relation and these obligations be signified by a visible token as in the case of circumcision?

3. *The apostles baptized households.*

Paul baptized the household of Stephanas. (1 Cor. 1. 16.) Lydia and her household were baptized. (Acts 16. 15.) The same chapter (ver. 33.) records the baptism of the jailor and all his.

As it regards Lydia, it is written, "*whose heart* the Lord opened"—and she says, "If ye have judged *me* to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there." She appears to have been the only believer. So in the case of the jailor. He and his family were baptized, but it is not certain that they all believed. The original is *he believing*, rejoiced with all his house. But these instances establish the fact that the baptism of *families* was customary. And in many households taken collectively, *one* child at least might be found. Besides, it was the custom to baptize immediately on believing, and if the families were all converts, each household believed at the same time—a supposition not altogether probable. And why, if it were so, is it not mentioned that the households all believed?

4. *Ecclesiastical history is entitled to consideration.*

The Jews, as appears from their writings, were accustomed to baptize proselytes, male and female. *Maimonides*, (Jesuribia, chap. 13. 14.) having said that the Israelites were entered into covenant by baptism, circumcision and sacrifice, adds, "so in all ages when an ethnic (Gentile) is willing to enter into the covenant, and gather himself under the wings of the majesty of God, and take upon him the yoke of the law, he must be circumcised and baptized, and bring a sacri-

fice; or if a woman, bring a sacrifice and be baptized. As it is written." (Num. 15. 15.) The Talmud Babylon states the same thing, and with it corresponds the Mishna. The ancient Christians speak of this baptism. See *Gregory Nazianzen*, (Orat. 39.) *Cyprian** says, "The condition of the Jews under the apostles was different from that of the Gentiles, because the Jews having received the most ancient baptism of the law and of Moses, were baptized also in the name of Jesus Christ." Dr. Lightfoot says (Hor. Heb. on Matt. 3. 6.) "The baptism of infants was a thing as well known in the Jewish, as it ever has been in the Christian church." Proselytes, i. e. *those who have come in*, are mentioned at a very ancient period, and afterwards in the history of the reigns of Solomon and David. In the time of Christ and the apostles they were found every where in great numbers; some *circumcised*, and some *uncircumcised*. The class of PROSELYTES called the righteous (circumcised) were united with the great body of the Jewish people, not only by circumcision, but by baptism also. The Jews assert that the baptism of proselytes, which has now been spoken of, is mentioned in Ex. 19. 10–14: 24. 8: Gen. 35. 2. Christ speaks of this baptism in such a way as to imply that it was well known, (John 3. 10.) and the only point which Nicodemus did not understand, was that

*Epis. lxxiii. ad Jub. vol. i. p. 86.

the Jews also, who were already the children of Abraham, were to be born again by baptism. The female proselytes who received the Mosaic law, were baptized likewise.*

Justin Martyr, who wrote about *forty* years after the apostles, says, "We have not received the *carnal*, but *spiritual* circumcision, which Enoch, and those like him, observed. And we have received it by baptism, by the mercy of God. Several persons among us, sixty or seventy years old, of both sexes, who were discipled to Christ in or from their childhood, do continue uncorrupted."

Irenæus, writing *sixty-seven* years after the apostles, says: "Christ came to save all persons by himself: all I mean, who by him are regenerated (baptized, so they used the word) unto God, infants, and little ones, and children, and youth, and elder persons." *Origen*, also, *a hundred and ten* years after the apostles, states the fact of infant baptism, and gives as a reason for it, that they need forgiveness. According to *Cyprian*, a *hundred and fifty* years after the apostles, at a council of *sixty-six* bishops, it was decided that it was not necessary to follow the rule of circumcision, but if need required, an infant might be baptized before it was *eight* days old.†

* Jahn's Archæology, § 325.

† The departure from the rule of circumcision has been often objected to. But those who make the baptism of Christ their example, do not think it necessary to delay baptism till they are "about thirty years of age." The deviation in either case is unimportant.

On a review of the whole evidence which has been presented in detail, I cannot doubt that the immemorial practice of baptizing the children of the church, is as truly authorized as the baptism of females, or the observance of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath. But this solemn rite should be regarded as a great *privilege*, no less than a *duty*. If parents realize their obligations while they carry the lambs to the Shepherd—if they fulfil the duties enjoined, (Deut. 11. 18–21.) God will remember his covenant, and pour his spirit upon their seed, and his blessing upon their offspring. (Isa. 44. 3.)

I shall close with one brief remark. Too much importance is attached to *external rites*, and too little to *vital godliness*. In every nation, he that *feareth* Him and *worketh righteousness*, is accepted with Him. (Acts 10. 35.) Zeal should expend itself in efforts to multiply converts to righteousness—to unfurl the banner of the cross on every mountain and in every valley —to make the desert and solitary place glad—and the song of redeeming love ascend from every habitation of darkness and cruelty.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

THE doctrines illustrated in the preceding chapters are interwoven with our endless destiny. According as we believe and obey, or disbelieve and reject them, the joys or sorrows which they reveal must inevitably constitute our eternal inheritance. The importance of giving earnest heed to the great salvation, therefore, is commensurate with the value of the soul. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." This description of the obedience necessary to secure the heavenly felicity is followed by a problem: *What is a man profited if he shall gain the* WHOLE WORLD *and lose his* OWN SOUL? *or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?** (Matt. 16. 26.) This question of loss and gain baffles at the first glance the highest powers of

*It cannot be necessary to show that this passage implies the possibility and danger of endless perdition. What else can it mean? The Scriptures explicitly teach such a doctrine, and there is a sin which "hath never forgiveness, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." (Matt. 12. 32: Mark 3. 29.) God does not expressly inform us what this sin is, except that it

intellect; for the solution requires that the *value of the soul* be estimated and compared with the *value of the world.* God only is capable of such arithmetic. But it will be profitable, so far as we are capable, to look at the amount of the two sums which have been specified.

I. *The value of the world.*

Before we inquire how far this world is an equivalent for the heavenly inheritance, it seems reasonable to deduct all the earthly enjoyment which is consistent with salvation. The problem is, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole happiness which the world can afford and lose his own soul? The gospel requires us to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness—to give holy things the preference in our desires and pursuits; but this injunction obeyed, we are permitted to enjoy the good things of life, in common with the unbelieving.

> Religion does not censure or exclude
> Unnumbered pleasures, harmlessly pursued.

The pleasures, therefore, which shut us out from the glories of heaven, are criminal; and these constitute the whole portion which the wicked gain at the expense of salvation. This ruinous treasure is composed of *riches*, *honours*, and *sensual gratifications.* The sum is easily told.

is committed against the Holy Ghost. He has erected no beacon on this rock, to show us how near we may approach with safety. His silent language is, Beware of *all* iniquity, lest you commit *that sin* which is never forgiven.

1. *What are riches?*

Do they make their possessor happy? happy without consecrating them to the service of God? I make this exception, because the disciple who laid his Lord in his own new sepulchre was rich, and happy in his possessions thus employed. (Matt. 27. 57–60.) We are speaking of the man who makes this world his only good. Can he be satisfied with wealth? For ages, the truth has been demonstrated that the more a man hath the more will he desire to have. His treasures may accumulate like the waves of the sea; and he may gather around him all that delights the eye, the ear, the taste. He may clothe himself in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day—but if this is his only source of enjoyment, he will be compelled to exclaim, like the king of Jerusalem amid his "great works, and houses, and vineyards, and silver and gold, and the delights of the sons of men: Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." (Eccles. ch. 1.) We must take also into the account the cares and perplexities of riches—their demoralizing effect on the character of the possessor—the uncertainty of their enjoyment—the brief term of possession. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. (Luke 12. 15.) Riches profit not in the day of wrath. (Prov. 11. 4.) If we allow the treasures of this world, then, all that the greatest idolater can claim for them, what

are they, compared with the "durable riches?" They can be no more compared than the *sun* and the *pebble* sparkling in his beams.

2. *What are the honours of this world?*

Let the whole be amassed together, and conferred upon a single individual. Let him ascend the loftiest summit in knowledge, science, wisdom, renown—does he need nothing more to complete his happiness? In dignity and blessedness, what relation does he sustain to Moses, Elijah, Paul? What can he bring out from his ample storehouse to "give in exchange for his soul?" How shall he escape from the intrusive reflection that the grave must soon divest him of his many honours?

3. *What is the value of sensual gratifications?*

These are the lowest of sinful enjoyments. We share them in common with the brutes that perish. Suppose a man indulge without restraint every appetite and passion: what advantage hath this *rational* animal above the *irrational* animals that subserve the purposes of their creation and exist no more for ever? Temperance is partial happiness; but every sensual desire, urged beyond the prescribed rules of temperance, produces misery. Every view which we have taken, or can take, of mere earthly good, brings us to the conclusion that, abating the many disappointments and afflictions of life, the uncertainty of its

pleasures; the brief term at best of their duration; and adding the remorse and forebodings incident to this fallen state, the world—although its dark scenes are lighted up by the sunshine of many enjoyments—is not of great value. Considered as the only object of pursuit and the chief good, it is at best but vanity and vexation of spirit. I ask the man of experience: what is the world—the whole world, with its lights and shadows; its smiles and tears; its momentary joys and unsatisfying pleasures, in comparison of that "eternal weight of glory" reserved in heaven for the sons of God? We are to estimate,

II. *The value of the soul.*

I have said *estimate*, but we can only walk around the shore of the ocean, and admire the incomprehensible vastness. The soul of man was made in the image of God, and partakes, in some degree, of the mystery of his own eternal duration. He alone can compute its worth. I shall attempt to exhibit something of its value by considering its *attributes*.

1. *Immortality.*

All the ideas we can form of eternity are derived from endless duration. But how mysterious is this thought! The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth—the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved—the heavens depart with a great noise—death finishes his work and expires—time hears the voice of the archangel and

is no more—but the soul is still in the vigour of imperishable youth. "Try to form a conception of that eternity which you are soon to know. Count by fifties, and thousands, and millions; and when your arithmetic is tired, and your mind is tired, and your conceptions fail, pause and consider that you have done no more to form an idea of your own futurity, than if you had attempted to calculate the atoms which compose the world by counting the grains in a handful of sand. As a drop of water in the ocean of waters, so is all the duration of which you can form a conception to the duration of an immortal soul." This one attribute, *immortality*, confounds all our powers of calculation, and fills us with amazement as we send our thoughts into the abyss of futurity, and labour to form an idea of endless existence. "I tremble," said the pious Davies, "when I think of my future self."

2. *Capacity of knowledge.*

This is another godlike attribute. The soul will be eternally developing its powers, and augmenting its intellectual treasures. How much shall we know when we become as old as the cherubim? How much when we have advanced myriads of ages beyond the date of *their* present existence? These are questions which we ask, and leave unsolved. We can no more ascertain the amount of knowledge which will be treasured up through everlasting ages, than we can esti-

mate the price of the soul endowed with such a marvellous capacity.

3. *Imagination is another attribute.*

Every one knows something of this mysterious faculty from his own experience. In his solitary musings he has transformed the sunlit clouds into dwelling places, and peopled them with happy beings. He has caused to pass before his vision things terrible—things beautiful. He has pictured to himself scenes of exquisite happiness—scenes of melting tenderness, and wept, and rejoiced at the combinations of his own fancy. But the wonders of imagination are best exhibited in the prophets and sacred poets. Who can listen to the lofty strains of Israel's chief singer on the harp, or read the sublimely terrible descriptions of wrath coming down on a guilty people, as given by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, John in his exile, and not feel that the soul of man—his *own soul*—is the image of God, and of infinite value? The power of imagination is also exhibited in the productions of uninspired poets. Pagan Homer is an unfading illustration; and Milton, the Christian Homer, penetrating "beyond the visible diurnal sphere;" and Shakspeare, giving

> ———to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name;

and Byron,

> Weaving his garland of the lightning's wing,
> In sportive twist, the lightning's fiery wing—

Exulting in the glory of his might,
And smiling, fiendlike, on the *wreck he made!*

4. *The intellectual faculties are entitled to consideration.*

They have achieved wonderful things. In natural and moral philosophy, Bacon and Newton shed an astonishing flood of light on the darkness of the age which gave them birth. Other men, too, have shone as lights in the world, in every department of morals and science. The philosophers of ancient and modern days form a bright constellation, and a brighter is formed by eminent reformers, divines, philanthropists. To these we may add, as exhibiting the power and consequent greatness of the mental faculties, the heroes of all ages; and the men who have excelled in the arts and sciences. The pyramids of Egypt—the ruins of mighty cities and monumental columns—the wonders of modern discovery and invention—all the prodigies accomplished by man demonstrate the godlike greatness of the soul, the mysterious vastness of its intellectual and moral powers.

5. *Consider the strength of the natural affections and passions.*

Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. *Desire* ungratified destroys the firmest health. *Melancholy* casts its gloomy shade over the brightest of Jehovah's works. *Grief* deprives the tongue of utterance—makes the mother

———sit and mourn
In her unpeopled home, a broken stem
O'er its fall'n roses dying.

Fear makes the "lips quiver at the voice, and rottenness enter the bones." *Anger* and *revenge* burn like fire. *Joy* rolls a tumultuous tide which flesh and blood can hardly sustain. *Strong excitement* has terminated life in the twinkling of an eye. How vast, then, must be the powers and capacities of that invisible agent, the *mind*, if it produce such effects on the firm frame-work in which it is enclosed! Expanding with sudden emotion, it can shiver the wheel at the fountain, as an overcharged cannon is rent into fragments.

6. *The power of memory exhibits the worth of the soul.*

This wondrous faculty recalls the long past images of happiness and sorrow—restores to their original freshness things over which the stream of oblivion has rolled. Through eternity it will gather up the seasons spent on earth—the pious deeds of life, augmenting the bliss of heaven—the sins and follies of life, increasing the miseries of hell. As an auxiliary to remorse, memory will be armed with prodigious power; for ever agonizing the unredeemed with the recollection of broken vows; the unavailing prayers and tears of pious friends; the slighted warnings of the Spirit; the folly of losing the summer and the harvest.

If we collect now the powers and faculties which have been described, and take into view their combined operation, what must the soul be capable of *enjoying* or *suffering* through eternity? The moments of bliss we experience in the present suffering state show us what we might enjoy if perfectly free from sin and its concomitant evils. But if these transient, rapturous gleams of joy are but the remnant of that overflowing blessedness which preceded the fall, what must be the perfection of glory in the heavens? There are moments of *exquisite anguish* in this world of *hope* and *mercy*. What then will misery be when it is hopeless, endless? Contemplate the horrors of remorse, exhibited in the suicide of Judas; in the forebodings of Herod, haunted by the imaginary resurrection of murdered John Baptist; in the agony of Newport; in the misery of every convicted sinner. If this be the foretaste, what must the soul be capable of suffering from the eternal upbraidings of conscience, and the everlasting pollution of its best affections, and the meted recompense of transgression!

7. *The price paid for its redemption demonstrates the worth of the soul.*

We have not been redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from our vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1 Pet.

1. 18.) If the price of the soul is estimated according to the *means* devised and the character of the *Agents* employed for its recovery, the sum must be of incalculable magnitude. That cannot be a small thing which awakens the deepest compassion, and excites the united exertions of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We are lost in the insufferable glory which beams from the cross. The soul, for whose redemption it was erected, must be worth as much as heaven's eternal blessedness—worth as much as deliverance from the sorrows of endless perdition.

8. *The same truth is illustrated by the joy of angels over every returning sinner.*

The children of this world are pleased with its baubles—by nature knowing nothing better than earth-born pleasures. But the celestial hosts have a rational ground for every delight. The mere fact, therefore, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth, is proof that a mighty change is wrought in the character, present condition, and future prospects of that sinner. They welcome him to the kingdom of *their* Lord and *his* Lord; and when the last prodigal is gathered home, they will lift up their voice with the redeemed, like the voice of many waters, celebrating the riches of recovering grace.

Reader! have you ever deliberately contemplated *the worth of your own soul?* God has

given to man, says an old writer, two *hands*, two *feet*, two *eyes*, and two *ears*, that the loss of the one might be supplied by the other. But he has given only *one* soul:—*that* lost, *all is lost!* Have you solemnly considered the danger of incurring, in *your own person*, this immeasurable loss, while postponing repentance and faith till you have collected a few more perishing treasures from the ruins of this world? My task is done. As I give you my affectionate farewell, be entreated to make salvation the *immediate* and *great* concern. The wife of Lot became a pillar of salt by lingering to cast one backward look on burning Sodom. The man-slayer might feel the sword of the avenger if he paused a moment without the gate of the city of refuge. With the waters of the deluge at their feet, the fugitives in vain "stood weeping at the door of the ark." We must all soon be ushered into the unseen world, and know the reality of future things.

Then let us gather round the cross,
That knowledge to obtain;
Not by the soul's eternal loss,
But everlasting gain.